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PREFACE.

These lessons are intended in some measure both to unite and to supplement the preceding four courses of graded manuals. On the other hand, details which could find no place in this series will be found in the more critical treatment which those earlier courses provide.

May this imperfect presentation of some of the noble passages, in which lies the power of the Bible, help us to get at the heart of that "genius for religion" of which it was born, and help us to discover something of the religious inspiration of our own time and in our own life.

W. H. P.

CHICAGO, May, 1901.

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INTRODUCTORY.

The Ground already Covered.

The graded series has already treated nearly the whole of the Bible.

First, we have the *Old Testament Narratives*, dealing mainly with the Pentateuch and Joshua, and carrying the early history of Israel down to the time when prophecy makes its appearance in the person of Amos.

Then *The Story of Israel* takes up the thread, and surveys the record as preserved for us in the Book of Kings and in the writings of the great prophets, from the appearance of Amos to the great restoration under Nehemiah in the middle of the fifth century before Christ. It then, in more rapid survey, carries us on to the building of the temple by Herod the Great, and ends with a sketch of the time of Jesus.

Great Thoughts of Israel treats of the wonderful literature which arose between the return from captivity and the time of Herod. Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Chronicles, Ruth, Esther, Jonah, Daniel, and those two gems of the Apocrypha, Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon, are all reviewed.

Then come *Scenes from the Life of Jesus*, and the *Leaflets for Teachers* which supplement this series. Together they treat of the Gospel narratives, and present an outline of the simple life which underlies the later elaboration which is so prominent in the Bible records.

The Teaching of Jesus covers the same ground from a different point of view and is followed by *The Beginning of Christianity*, with its account of Paul and his work.

The Present Course.

The lessons this winter propose to glance at the Bible as a whole, and to consider more in detail particular passages from all its varied contents, which stand out because of their special value and beauty. The selection has been largely determined by the necessity of avoiding ground already covered in previous courses. As a result, a great deal of attention has been given to extracts from the Epistles.

An endeavor has also been made to present the variety which is one of the most marked characteristics of the Bib'

and to leave no part unrepresented. The most noteworthy exception is the Book of Psalms. But, as this has had a course by itself, prepared by Mr. Fenn, it was thought wise to leave that noble collection of the religious songs of Israel to him.

Plan of the Lessons.

Each lesson will commence with the passage under consideration printed in full. These passages have of course in many cases had to be curtailed by the omission of unessential matter, and in one or two instances two passages from different parts of the book have been put together.

The translation followed is that of the revised version, the only version universally accessible which is fairly accurate and still preserves to a very great extent the unparalleled rhythm of the great translation we know as the Authorized Version. Here and there the alternative reading of the margin has been preferred as giving greater clearness; and in one or two cases a conjunction has been added or deleted, so as to enable the passage under consideration to run smoothly and consecutively.

The series will open with two lessons on the Old Testament as a whole. Preceding the selections from the New Testament come two lessons surveying in the same way the New Testament books.

The Result Aimed at.

The course ought to afford us a general idea of the nature and origin of the books which, as a collected whole, we call the Bible. It ought also to help us to know for ourselves some of its noblest passages, and to gain a fresh sense of its power.

These lessons will, of course, rely much on the historical and other matter already published, to which constant reference will be made; and they may lead us to feel how the general treatment of the books naturally leads up to the more detailed study which in some thirty selected instances this series attempts.

If this course results in a better understanding of what the Bible is, and even in small measure in a closer acquaintance with some of the memorable utterances it contains, it will prove a fitting supplement to the series of lessons already issued. But more even than these it seems to afford material rich in suggestions for that "instruction in righteousness" which is ever the main aim of our Sunday-schools.

Lesson I.

WHAT IS THE OLD TESTAMENT? Part I.

I. The Inspiration of the Bible.

The old theory of inspiration declared that the Bible was written as no other book ever was. God dictated it, so to speak, by direct revelation to the writers; and it was, therefore, perfect and without mistake throughout. No one had a right to question its authority.

This, it was said, was claimed by the Bible itself. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Its pious use was thought to be commended by Jesus himself when he said, "Search the Scriptures." Unfortunately, neither of these sayings really occurs in the Bible. (See 2 Tim. iii. 16 and John v. 39, R. V.)

In addition, the more men began to investigate the real nature of the Bible, the more absurd any such position became. They found in it contradictions of all kinds. They found commands attributed to God which were worthy only of half-civilized men. They found statements which corresponded to men's early ideas of the universe which our fuller knowledge has shown to be impossible. They discovered, also, that in the Bible, close beside writings of the highest spiritual character, there is much that is of little value to religion.

The result is that to-day we are coming to look upon the Bible as a collection of Hebrew literature,—some of it early and quite unspiritual, bearing all the marks of the rude ideas which gave it birth: some of it worthy to take its place with the most splendid achievements of the human spirit, and calculated to create and foster, as no other literature has done, the noblest ideals of religion and of human life. It is in this sense that parts of the Bible are inspired, because they kindle the inspiration of high ideals.

II. The Contents of the Old Testament.

When we look at the list at the beginning of our Bibles, we see that the Old Testament, as we call it, contains thirty-nine books. There is nothing to show us what their nature is, and

from reading the list over we should gain only the faintest notion as to their subjects. There is, however, a rough arrangement, if we look for it carefully. The first eighteen books are supposed to be history. Then come the four poetical books. The remainder are the writings of the prophets.

But, when we ask how the Jews divided these books, we find something quite different. To them the first five books alone were sacred in the highest sense. They were "The Law." We speak of them as the Pentateuch.

The next division was called "The Prophets." It was made up of two divisions, each consisting of four parts. Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings formed the first part. (The division of Samuel and Kings into two parts each was not recognized.) The second comprised Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the group of twelve minor prophets,

The remaining books were all classed together, as of lesser value, and were not thought of as Scripture at all, in the sense in which the Law was so regarded.

It is well for us to keep this division in mind, for it helps us to distinguish better the great classes of literature which are all gathered together in the Bible.

In this lesson we shall glance at the Law and the four historical books which form the first division of the "Prophets." Then in the next lesson we shall point out the character of the remaining books.

III. The Pentateuch and Joshua.

For our purpose we have to class Joshua along with the Pentateuch, because, as we shall see, these six books form one whole.

We must remember, too, that books were not written in those days as they are now. They were compiled. An early history and a later history were woven together to make one book. Then some one, wishing to have a still more complete account, pieced into this the contents of another account. Later corrections and alterations were made, till at last we have a complex patchwork, which we are sometimes able to separate into its different parts with considerable certainty.

The Hexateuch (as we call the Pentateuch and Joshua) is a compilation of this kind. It is woven together out of three great documents.

First we have the collection of early stories and laws, or

rather usages, which we call the early book of Hebrew history. Technically, it is called "JE," because it is itself made up of two earlier collections by writers of whom one uses the name Jahweh for God and the other Elohim. The initial letters of these, J and E, are used for the compilers, and JE for their combined work.

This early book contains nearly all the brightly written stories of the earliest times with which we are familiar.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, Lot, the vivid picture of the Garden of Eden, the story of the flood, the narrative of the tower of Babel, all belong to it. It is the book of the traditions of early days as men told them at the feasts some eight hundred years before Christ, and reaches back still further into the wonderful land of legend before Hebrew history began.

Second is the law book which Josiah made the law of the land in 621. The kernel of this is in our present Book of Deuteronomy. But, when it was combined with the earlier sacred collection, the compiler made alterations to allow his narrative to fit into what seemed its proper place in the new volume he was compiling.

Third comes the great book of the history of Israel from the beginning, as the later people of the law introduced after the captivity regarded it. It is formal, artificial, full of the countless details of legislation which we find most fully in Leviticus. We call it "P," the priestly law book. It grew to completion only after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, and was not combined with the earlier books JE and D till later still.

When these were all pieced together to make one whole, the result was the great compilation which lies before us in the first six books of our Bible. It contains very varied material,—scraps of early songs, myths about the patriarchs, collections of decisions which governed the relations of the wandering nomads before they settled in Palestine, sometimes two or three versions of the same story; and, holding it all together, the book of the great ritualists of the later temple.

IV. Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

Here, too, we have a history woven together of many strands,—legends of the wild times before Israel became united; portions, too, of records of the time of Samuel and David, which read as though they could not have been written

so very long after the events they record, but all of it edited by pious men of later times, who brought the narrative into accord with what they thought was proper or passed judgment on the monarchs of whom the earlier record had written.

V. Summary.

Taken together, the Hexateuch, Judges, Samuel, and Kings contain all that remains of the early legend and history before the exile. It has been worked over by men of later times. But, when we separate the earlier material, we have a wonderful picture of early days, when life was simple and full of color, and not yet formalized by the priestly régime which gave rise to the Pharisaism of the time of Jesus.

VI. Further Material.

The last lesson in "The Story of Israel" and the last lesson in "Great Thoughts of Israel" (advanced grade) will be useful. The Polychrome Bible shows well the strata in Judges. Addis's "The Oldest Book of Hebrew History" gives us JE by itself. Bissell's "Genesis Printed in Colors" shows how Genesis has been woven together. All through "Early Old Testament Narratives" we have examples of the same thing. The best way to use this lesson is to do so Bible in hand, noting roughly samples of the different material. Get the main facts well impressed.

Lesson II.

WHAT IS THE OLD TESTAMENT? Part II.

I. Last Lesson.

We saw that in the Hebrew order of the Old Testament books they fall into three great divisions,—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Prophets, again, were regarded as forming two divisions, the earlier and the later, the first of these divisions containing those earliest historical records of Israel of which we have spoken. We now come to the second division, consisting of four parts,—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the group of twelve minor prophets.

II. Who were the Prophets.

The title is a bad one. The Hebrew prophet was not a foreteller of coming events except in so far as he foresaw what were to him the inevitable consequences of the conditions about him.

In reality, they were the great national preachers of righteousness. Their writings are the expression of the noblest religious ideals of Israel. As the Law incorporates the ceremonial development of religion, so the writings of the prophets express its inner inspiration and growth.

They deal, however, not with individual righteousness so much as with national righteousness. It is the fate of Israel, God's people, which is their theme. The ever-varying fortune of the nation is to them the expression of the good will or anger of God. Open any one of these books almost at random, and we shall find that they deal with the judgment of God on Israel or her neighbors.

III. Their Relative Importance.

Some of these preachers are of little value. They are rather echoes of what has gone before than heralds of better things to come. But amongst them there are six who are of the greatest importance. Two of these are found in the great collection which we call the Book of Isaiah. For convenience we call them Isaiah of Jerusalem and the Second Isaiah. The latter is the herald of the return, whose work opens with

the famous fortieth chapter. Two others are Amos and Hosea, the earliest and perhaps most interesting figures of all. Ezekiel, the builder of the church ideal which grew into the legislation and life of the return, forms the fifth. Greatest of all, Jeremiah, the inspired pioneer six hundred years before Jesus of universal and spiritual religion, completes our little list.

IV. The Third Division of the Hebrew Bible.

The remaining twelve books stand at the end of the Hebrew Bible in a group by themselves. They are of least importance of all from the point of view of the rabbi, but full of interest to us. They are called simply "Writings."

The Book of *Psalms* comes first. It is a collection of collections of sacred songs. They were gathered together for use in the services of the second temple, and many of them are full of its formal spirit. Just as in our hymn-books we have only too often a good deal of poor poetry and poor religion as well as some real hymns, so it is in the Book of *Psalms*.

It is only a dim tradition of David as the great singer of Israel which has given his name to the collection.

Next we have *Proverbs*. This, too, is a collection associated with a famous name. By looking at it carefully, we shall see that it is composed of various parts, and consists of short sayings, usually of a prudential character. Its most important feature are the chapters on wisdom, from which one of our lessons is to be taken.

Job, the third of the Writings, is one of the great books of history. It is a dramatic dialogue between Job and his three orthodox friends on the subject as old and as modern as human nature, "Why does God permit the good to suffer?"

Last of all on the list comes *Chronicles*. It is a review of Israel's history, from the point of view of a godly Jew of the Restoration. As history, it is rightly placed last of all; for, except where it quotes earlier work, it is historically valueless.

Ezra and *Nehemiah* are the history of the struggle of the exiles on their return to re-establish the city of their fathers and rebuild the temple.

Of the remaining books, that which is of most interest is *Ecclesiastes*. In spite of the fact that some later editor has tried to introduce a pious conclusion right at the end of the book, it is difficult to understand how this record of a cynical man of the world ever came to be included in the Scriptures. It is of

intensely human interest because of its frankness and honesty in facing the darker aspects of life as a man wholly without religion or enthusiasm regards it.

V. Summary.

The Old Testament, then, consists first of a compilation of legend and tradition and legislation which we call the Pentateuch; then of a collection of records of the history of the nation, some of them of early date and great interest; then of a gathering of the writings of the great preachers who helped to mould the religious destiny of the people; lastly, of a number of books of varying character, including later history books and the temple collection of songs, in addition to books on the philosophy of life and some others of less value.

It is a literature rather than a book. When we use it as a book for the nurture of religion, we have to choose and reject much. Yet in it we find the records of the most wonderful religious growth in the world, and much that will never grow old or lose its value.

VI. Translations.

The books of the Old Testament were all written in Hebrew. As we have seen, they were arranged in order of value and of age. But, when the Jews scattered over the world and ceased to understand Hebrew, a translation into Greek, the language of the civilized world at the time, was made. This is called the Septuagint, and is of great interest, partly because it shows us that the Hebrew writings, from which it was translated, differed in many details from the version which has come down to us.

In this Greek translation the books were arranged as they are in our Bible, according to subject, except that the Apocryphal writings were included. The Latin Bible of the Roman Catholic Church is a translation of the Septuagint, and follows its order. It is called the Vulgate.

The Authorised Version which we now use is perhaps the best of the translations into English which were made shortly after the Reformation. It is a monument of magnificent English, and often has a splendor which is wholly lacking in the original. It is, however, owing to ignorance of Hebrew and the absence of all endeavor to procure as correct an original as possible, a very faulty translation.

The Revised Version is an attempt to remove some of the

mistakes, while retaining as far as possible the diction of the Authorised Version.

The Polychrome Bible now in course of publication is the latest attempt to present in English the Bible as it really is.

VII. Results.

When we look at the Old Testament without prejudice and are led by the evidence of the facts which we find in it to conclusions as to its origin and nature such as have just been stated, all the difficulties which used to be thought to be such a menace to religion disappear. They were due to the initial error of regarding the Bible as infallible and the Word of God.

With this fuller knowledge, too, disappear the difficulties as regards the creeds, which still disturb some of the churches. These creeds depend on the authority of Scripture. When that is set aside and we ask simply, "What is the truth?" the passing away of obsolete ideas is natural and easy. A truer interpretation of the facts has simply taken their place.

VIII. References and Suggestions.

Fuller information is given in the advanced grade of "Great Thoughts of Israel," especially in lessons xvi., xviii., and xx. See the books of reference referred to there and in "The Story of Israel."

The twelve minor prophets are the twelve books which come last in our Old Testament. Jonah does not properly belong here, but is so placed because it bears the name of the prophet mentioned in 2 Kings xiv. 25.

The "Writings," or third division of the Hebrew Bible, are Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles.

These opening lessons are best taught with the list of Old Testament books in hand. A definite idea of the contents of the Old Testament and their general character may thus be gained. The contrast between the Hebrew order of the books and that in our Bible is most instructive, partly because the former was in general an order of value.

Lesson III.

ABRAM AND LOT.

AND Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south, even to Bethel. And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou take the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere. So Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan. And Abram moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

ABRAM AND LOT.

I. The Source of the Narrative.

As we saw in the first lesson, the earliest strand in the Pentateuch is a collection of vivid legends and early usages which we call JE. This story, as we should at once guess from its style even in translation, comes from this collection.

We saw, too, that, while it is perfectly clear that JE is itself made up of two separate collections, it is not always possible to divide them with certainty from one another. Happily, in this case it is perfectly clear. The story of the lesson (except unimportant parts of verses 6, 11, and 12) comes from J. Note that the earliest stories know nothing of Abraham. The name they use is Abram. The late priestly writer is responsible for the change, and explains it in Genesis xvii. When the early and late narratives were combined Abram was changed to Abraham whenever it occurred subsequent to that chapter.

That helps us to picture the fact that our story was current in the south of Palestine, as part of the traditions about the distant past, over 800 years before Christ.

When the struggling Hebrews, beginning to gain a foothold in Palestine and to forsake the nomadic life of the desert, came together at some sacred place to hold a feast in honor of Jahweh, then the elders used to tell tales like these of the long-gone fathers who used to possess the land before the wanderings.

How much fact lies hidden under these narratives it is hard to say. Whether there ever were persons Abram and Lot or no, whether they are only names standing for separate clans, each referring itself to some one ancestor, cannot be certainly decided. Only this much is clear,— that we are dealing with legend, and not with history. And that is what gives the chief interest to the matter before us.

II. What the Early Stories of a People tell.

Just as Homer telling us little of the real story of some far-off siege of Troy, all unconsciously shows the thoughts and ideals of men of his time, so these patriarchal narratives help

us to understand the atmosphere of the childhood of Israel. It has been well said, "Let me make the songs of a people, and I care not who makes their laws." So more than aught else in the growth alike of individual and nation are the familiar tales of its childhood. The people of Israel called themselves children of Abram. The picture they drew of Abram in their early days shows us the ideal which they had created for themselves, that it in turn might mould them.

It is in this way that these Old Testament stories have had such an influence all through the history of Western civilization in forming character. The doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture has its good as well as its bad side. It was not for nothing that the Calvinists of the Highlands had wrought into the very fibre of their being ideals like these of patriarchal times.

III. What is the Picture?

It is often gross. There are parts of the patriarchal tales which are unfit for modern ears. Parts, like the early story of Jacob and Esau, breathe an atmosphere of cunning and cleverness rather than of honest manliness. But in little episodes like this before us there is a real air of nobility. Who can forget the narrative of Abram going out, knowing not whither he went, because he believed it to be the will of God.

So here we are dealing with two of nature's gentlemen. The attempt to overreach or outwit or master by force is foreign to the whole tone of the narrative. "Let there be no strife between us, for we are brethren." What a fine dignity pervades both men! Herdsmen might fight and wrangle. Their masters take a wiser and finer way. It is the old *noblesse oblige* again.

IV. What has this to do with Religion?

As we see all through the stories, the ideas about God and his dealings with men are superstitious and primitive. God is to be propitiated by the smell of the burning fat on the altar. He is only a larger man, like themselves. Ritual, priesthood, elaborate code of religious observance, there is none.

But far more important than all these is the sense of what is fitting in a man, if he is a great man. Right worthy conduct, a certain nobleness which will not condescend to a mean and selfish policy, is setting itself up as an ideal and working its way into men's lives. Laws do not make men. Men make

laws. The sense of righteousness is the first step as it is the last in religion. All else is but expression of this, or, when a higher ideal arrives, hindrance to it.

V. Suggestions.

1. The importance of the unconscious influence of ideals. We see it in the effects of reading. Low tales of piracy and a violent life of successful wrong have often turned boys into unworthy paths. The constant reading of silly sentiment enfeebles and enervates the whole character.

But if our heroes are worthy, if the stories of our childhood are full of the air of real and noble life, unconsciously we stand more erect and carry ourselves with greater self-respect.

The unconscious companionships of the mind and imagination have more than we sometimes think to do with the fostering or destroying of character. Learn to have a taste for things that ring true and deeds that help manliness and savor of real and worthy life. Cherish the memory of all heroes, and the heroic in you will respond.

2. Note that religion is a matter of temper and bearing more than of church or creed. These men were noble, large-hearted men. Their religion, as far as all that we usually mean by that word goes, was very poor and primitive. Better far be a good man with a poor creed than a mean man with advanced opinions. Best of all when knowledge leads to noble conduct and we pitch life high because we see clearly why it is good.

3. Suggest that we here have something of the idea that we can, if we will, find a better way to settle differences than the old savage way of war. When we grow wise enough to understand it, there is a way of common welfare. No man, no class, no nation, can really prosper save by the prosperity of others. The ideal to which we are slowly tending is that of a time when men shall find that all men are brethren, and that we can only secure our own highest good by making for the highest good of all.

4. What is the American ideal? For the individual? For the nation? What place has wealth in relation to it?

Lesson IV.

JACOB'S DREAM.

AND Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood beside him. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house.

GENESIS, chapter twenty-eight.

JACOB'S DREAM.

I. The Source of this Narrative.

As we should at once infer from its primitive and picturesque ideas, this is one of the stories from the early history book which we know as JE. There were two versions of the incident, one in the collection J and the other in the collection E. They were combined into the version we now read in our Bible when these were put together by the compiler of JE.

As it happens, the portions in the selection for this lesson are almost entirely from E's account. As we know, E uses Elohim (translated God) for the Deity, and J uses Jahweh (translated LORD). If we now look at the selection, it will be obvious that the sentence in line 9 is from J.

It may interest some of the older pupils to separate the parts belonging to J from those which are from E in the full version we find in the Bible. Verses 10, 13-16, and the clause at the end of verse 21, which is omitted in the lesson as printed on the preceding page, belong to J. It will be at once seen that we have a consecutive narrative, if these parts are left out.

II. Where the Writer heard it.

All over Palestine, in these early times, there were sacred places, marked sometimes by an ancient upright stone, dark with the oil which worshippers poured on it, sometimes by a sacred tree. It was at places like these that people gathered for the harvest festivals. An animal was killed and cooked. The fat was burned as a sweet-smelling offering to Jahweh, and the people feasted on the flesh. It was a season of merriment and jollification; and, after every one had well eaten, these tales of the good old days played their part. One or two fragments that have survived in JE suggest that early poetry and the minstrel had their place at these festivals, as they did among other nations. But of such early epics we have only a chance line or two.

Our lesson tells us how men accounted for the sacred upright stone at Bethel, one of the oldest sanctuaries. Its real origin is hid in the mists of the past.

Imagine the power of the story told to the throng beside the stone itself in a time when angels and the outward physical presence of Jahweh were as real to the listeners as the common facts of life are to us.

III. What a Primitive Atmosphere!

How interesting these thoughts of men's childhood are! The earth, to the men who told these tales, was a little, flat land overarched by the solid dome of the firmament, above which the gods and the "sons of God" lived. But how did they come down to earth? Why, there were ladders not visible to mortal sight. The end of one of these ladders was a sacred place, one of the entrances to heaven. The one at Bethel Jacob had discovered long ago, when he happened to lie down to sleep there; and in his sleep that became clear to him which could not be discovered by the waking eye. He set up the stone to mark the place. Is not the stone there right beside the sanctuary?

Dreams and visions are real to these people. In this, moreover, they are just like all others in the same stage of development. Superstition is the child of dreams everywhere, just as it is the earliest form of religion.

IV. The Holy Places.

We can now better understand how it was that the early Israelites worshipped at holy places. Jahweh was not everywhere. His place was in heaven. But there were haunts of his on earth. It was at such places that it was fitting to propitiate him, and seek his good will by sweet-smelling offering. If he did not prove helpful to his worshippers, they would refuse to bring sacrifice to him. The one is the price of the other. Religion is almost a bargain. And the places where it can be concluded are those at which Jahweh has made his presence known.

In later days a more highly organized religion tried to do away with these many sanctuaries, and made Jerusalem the only place where sacrifice could be fitly offered. But in the time from which our story comes the land was full of them. There were no priests, and there was no ritual. Sacrifice was a time of feasting and song. The iron yoke of sacerdotal religion had not yet been forged.

V. How far we have Travelled since then.

Within the Bible itself we can trace the growth. The sim-

ple sacrifice becomes the elaborate ritual of the temple, which is described in the priestly law book with which these very stories are interwoven in the Pentateuch.

But from men like Isaiah we learn that God neither needs nor loves sacrifice. From Jeremiah we hear that his service is the service of the heart. Jesus tells of God as the universal Father. Paul finds God's witness even in heathen lands and among those who have never even heard of the God of Israel.

In our own time wider knowledge has inevitably widened our thought of God. He is the infinite power which is manifested in everything we can know. All the unfolding of the universe as it rises into higher and ever higher forms of life is a manifestation of God, the unseen source of all. To live the highest life possible to us is best to serve him. For so are we best his children. Religion is simply the intensest, fullest life we can know.

Refer to Wordsworth's "I have felt a presence that disturbs me with the joy" ("Tintern Abbey"). Shelley, in "Adonais," speaks of the "Spirit's plastic stress" which "sweeps through the dull, dense world," as

"bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the heavens' light."

VI. Suggestions.

Note the survival of men's early and imperfect thought in our own time. Heaven and hell (or at least the former) are still places to some people. God is a being who may be induced to change his purposes if we only implore him enough. Nay, the effectiveness of such prayer is supposed to be increased by making it the simultaneous petition of a vast number of people.

The better attitude is simply and without prejudice to get at the real facts, and to order life in the light of our clearest knowledge and noblest feeling. Attempt a modern definition of religion.

Lesson V.

JACOB AND ESAU.

*J*ACOB, in fear of Esau's vengeance, sent servants with a great herd of cattle as a present to his brother. But the next day :

Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he himself passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And they wept. And he said, What meanest thou by all this company which I met? And he said, To find grace in the sight of my lord. And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; let that thou hast be thine. And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand. And he urged him, and he took it. And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee. And he said unto him, My lord knoweth if they overdrive them one day, all the flocks will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according to the pace of the cattle, and according to the pace of the children, until I come unto my lord unto Seir.

JACOB AND ESAU.

I. Whence does this Story come?

It is obvious that it is taken from the great collection of early stories, which we have considered in previous lessons. But which of the still earlier compilations gives it to us is not clear to the reader of the English version only. The student, however, recognizes at once that this, along with the greater part of the Jacob Esau stories, was originally part of the Judean collection by the writer whom we know as J because he calls God Jahweh.

II. The Earlier History of Jacob and Esau.

We cannot appreciate the force of this lesson without calling to mind what we learned in the previous course about these two brothers. Esau was a hunter, open, careless, uncalculating; Jacob, his mother's favorite, a cautious, quieter nature. By craft he had forced Esau, who was at the point of death from hunger, to sell him his birthright. He then, just before the death of Isaac, their father, cheated him of his father's blessing. Fleeing from Esau's anger, Jacob settled as herdsman with Laban. Here, though too often by crafty means, he prospered greatly, and married Leah and Rachel, Laban's daughters. He has now left Laban. This lesson tells us of his first meeting with the brother he had wronged.

III. The Nobility of Esau.

Again and again in the Old Testament we find the precepts which Jesus condemned when he referred to the old law of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Matt. v. 38), and much even in these old stories bears it out. But here, as in lesson iii., we come upon a nobler spirit.

Esau had every ground for paying Jacob back in his own coin. The double wrong had been unprovoked, and was of the most cowardly and treacherous character. Jacob had never shown by word or deed that he was even sorry. Now Esau has him in his power. What could Jacob, soft, wealthy, the man of many flocks, do against the wild Bedouin of the desert with his horseman? Nay, he himself, as we see by his precautions, expected only the worst.

Instead of this we have the picture of the lesson: "Esau ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." In spite of the fact that Jacob was the head of the nation which the chronicler venerated with all the glory of national pride, we cannot but feel that, even as he writes, he is proud of Esau, ancestor of the alien Edomites though he was.

IV. The Two Types.

Jacob and Esau are drawn with deep knowledge of human nature. Jacob weak in physique, cunning by nature, successful by craft. A smooth, oily man, never showing his hand and never forgetting his end, he is a type of the wily, diplomatic politician in the worst sense. He gets what he strives for,—success, money, power over his antagonists,—and yet, somehow, the story makes us ask whether by any chance it could have been worth while, as we see him cringe before the brother he had wronged, conscious enough of fear, not great enough to be ashamed. Yet he was his mother's pet, and the revered ancestor of the people of Israel.

Esau is his opposite. He is full of the zest of life, lover of the woods and the rough conditions of the open-air life. Too careless, it is true, about birthrights and blessings, but, in spite of it, finding the change and freedom of his own way more than compensation. There is something frank and vital about him. He will probably never be so successful as Jacob; but, after all, is it not better to be a man than to secure Jacob's success? Here in our story we see the best result of that type of character. Too often it runs careless love of pleasure to its bitter end. Sometimes it ripens into the open generous magnanimity which lies before us.

The man of the Jacob pattern rarely forgets a wrong; sometimes, as here, can hardly understand another's doing so. But when life is full and free, as it grows big with vital interests, there often comes a kind of easy delight in all the good about us, which makes it natural to forget and set on one side the wrongs that may have been done us. More than all that shadow of past days was the gladness of meeting a brother again as a brother and of letting the past go. Jacob must have been glad. The blow he feared has not fallen. But his delight could be but small to that of Esau, to whom wrong had brought no bitterness, who could look gladly and frankly into his brother's face, and not be either ashamed or afraid.

V. The Religion under the Legend.

Obviously, we have here nothing about religion as a thing of form and observance or belief. But, when we think of religion, as was suggested in last lesson, simply as making life able to reach its highest, there is here, just because it is true to experience, a good deal that is worth noting.

Conduct always brings certain inevitable consequences. You cannot allow yourself to be crafty, selfish, over-reaching, without paying for it. It is true that you often have an obvious reward, just as Jacob had his wealth of cattle and his position as the most successful man of his class. But what if you have paid too dearly for this? What if it has separated you from your fellows as it separated Jacob from Laban and from Esau, till he could look neither of them straight in the face? What if it has sapped your own self-respect, and made you conscious that when you are alone you are in bad company? Men often pay ruinously much for what seems to them to be good. Howells speaks of

"the defeat and loss
Of seeing all my selfish dreams fulfilled,
Of having lived the very life I willed,
Of being all that I desired to be."

On the other hand, it does not follow that the Esau temperament comes out inevitably noble. In the story he grows into a large-hearted child of the desert, too great to carry a grudge. But the man of his type, careless, full-blooded, loving good fellowship, lets his own baser desires get the upperhand too often, till he is their slave. Often men speak of him as a "good fellow," "his own worst enemy." But the strength and freedom and nobility which he might have won are forever beyond his reach. He has paid his price.

Lesson VI.

THE BURNING BUSH.

NOW Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. (And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.) And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Exodus, chapter three.

THE BURNING BUSH.

I. Origin of our Lesson Story.

A very great deal of what is recorded of Moses in the Bible belongs to the later times, after the exile, when Moses, as the founder of Israel's religion, was made responsible for all the details of the elaborate ritual of the later temple. But, incorporated with all this, we have a mass of picturesque detail belonging to the earliest collection of Hebrew legend and history. Our lesson is taken from this.

A comparison of the lesson as printed, with the complete text in Exodus, will show clearly the division between J and E. The version of the story we have selected belongs to E, with the exception of the words "of the LORD" in line 5.

II. Later Elaboration.

As we have just said, later times held Moses responsible for the details of law and ritual which were not dreamed of in the times pictured to us in these early stories of JE.

The mass of uninteresting material about the tabernacle, the legislation in Deuteronomy, Leviticus, and Numbers, the more elaborate accounts of the Exodus, and the impossible records of the march in the wilderness, all of them belong to these later times.

When we turn from these to JE, we have the simpler account of what eight hundred years before Christ had been handed down about the great founder of Israel's national and religious unity. Of this simpler tradition our lesson gives one of the opening scenes.

III. What Facts lie behind.

While it is clear that the later account of the work of Moses and the desert wanderings and the conquest of Palestine are historically impossible, are we, in these earlier stories, as in the case of the patriarchs, dealing with legend merely, or have we here a substratum of fact?

This much seems clear, that in the very earliest times, when the people of Jahweh first began to set down what they believed as to their origin, Moses stands out as the deliverer

from Egypt and the founder of Israel's existence as Jahweh's people. A great personality, kindling a sense of unity in these wandering tribes, rallying them round the worship of Jahweh, forming in himself a court of appeal where his decisions became the basis of the earliest codes, may well be looked on as historical. Beyond that we have little else but legend, even in the earliest stories, of which our lesson is one.

IV. The Primitive Ideas of the Lesson.

To those among whom narratives like this arose there was, as we have seen, nothing strange in a deity with local habitation and outer presence holding converse on special occasions with men. He who talked and ate with Abraham talks now with Moses. It is not the inner voice of the heart which is thought of (we must not read later ideas into early times), but speech just like the speech of man with man. God came down from above the firmament to talk with Moses, and called his attention to his presence by the wonder of a blazing thicket which did not burn away.

Recall what has been said in previous lessons about the religious ideas of early Israel. Refer for fuller details as to Moses to "Old Testament Narratives," lessons xiv. to xvii.

V. What may the Story suggest to us?

1. The power of a great personality.

All the wealth of Israel's religious genius, tincturing even now the best life and thought of our times, springs in its origin from the work of Moses. The germs were there. The unfolding of religion in the hearts of men can never be but the result of infinitely complex forces. But the work of drawing these forces to a focus, as it were, and giving them aim and direction in practical unity, belongs to this great child of the mountains and the desert. It was because of the indomitable courage and patience of this one man, the fruit of his loyalty to what he believed to be true, that these scattered clans of Semites became one of the mightiest religious forces the world has ever known.

2. The training of the hills.

It seems as though the greatest and strongest forms of character demand long, quiet years for their development. Only mushrooms can spring up in a night. The rush of modern life and education attains its own ends, but the deeper things which create the power of personality can only grow

slowly. Think of all that those long years tending Jethro's flocks amid the vast spaces and long solitudes of Midian must have meant. There was time there to think things out in some right perspective and to allow resolves to mature into the power that only time can bring. May it not be one of the highest functions of worship to create for us the quiet and repose in which character may look in on itself and become strong? Mahomet, Buddha, John, Jesus, Paul, are a few outstanding instances.

3. *God in nature.*

As we saw in lesson iv., there is, in a sense undreamed of by the narrator of our story, a divine presence in every tree of the field. All nature is, for those who care to see and think, ablaze with the presence of God. God is no longer a far-off infinite personality in some place beyond man's ken. He is the source of which all life, as it ascends to higher and higher forms, is the unceasing expression.

4. *The divine call.*

When we look at life from this standpoint, it is no figure of speech to say that God calls men to their work and place in the world. When we allow what appeals to the finest in us to move us to obedience, that is the call of the latent possibilities of life. It is the divine in and behind all human life seeking expression through us. No aspiration, no desire for finer living, no sense of the wrong about us, but is a divine message bidding us play our part worthily toward the deliverance of God's children from the bondage of ignorance and imperfect life.

Lesson VII.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

AND Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan; and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the hinder sea; and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he was buried in the valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.

DEUTERONOMY, chapter thirty-four.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

I. The Work of Successive Compilers.

It is of interest to note in such a book as Bacon's "Exodus" the many changes that have taken place, as this little section on the death of Moses gradually came to bear its present form. Happily, the additions are additions only, and do not mar the general sense of the early story as it was in JE.

It is perhaps also worth noting that, although it occurs in the same book, Deuteronomy xxi. 2 contradicts the statement in the lesson that "his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated."

Historically, our lesson is probably of little value. Perhaps underlying its traditional material may lie the suggestion that the great leader went back to the mountains in extreme old age. More probably, all that we can infer is that nothing was remembered of Moses' death.

We must therefore treat our narrative merely as what people had come to picture to themselves as the end of the founder of their religion. It does not on that account lose anything either in beauty or suggestiveness.

II. A Great Ending to a Mighty Life.

Was it not fitting that at the end he who had been trained among the hills should return to them? He began among them with visions of what lay before him. He ends there in the quiet he used to love, with his work well done and the land of promise which it had made possible laid out before him. Ruskin has a famous passage on this picture, from which we select a sentence or two: "For forty years Moses had not been alone. . . . And now at last the command came, Get thee up into this mountain. . . . It was not to embitter the last hours of his life that God restored to him for a day the beloved solitudes he had lost, and breathed the peace of the perpetual hills around him, and cast the world in which he had laboured and sinned far beneath his feet in that mist of dying blue. The Dead Sea lay waveless beneath him; and beyond it the fair

hills of Judah and the soft plains and banks of Jordan, purple in the evening light, and fading in their distant fulness into mysteries of promise and of love. There with his unabated strength, his undimmed glance, lying down upon the utmost rocks, . . . he put off his earthly armour." ("Modern Painters," vol. iv., ch. xx., par. 47.) See, if possible, the whole passage.

III. What makes such an Ending Great?

Herodotus tells us that Solon, the wisest of men, said that no man could be called fortunate till he had died. He meant that one cannot feel the true value of any life till one can see it in its completeness. So here the sense of greatness which may well come on us as we read has its reason in that which lay in the leader's mind as he looked back.

His had not been an easy nor, as we usually regard it, a happy life. Rather must it have been a long and incessant burden trying to mould the unruly and stiff-necked tribes into a common loyalty and a common obedience. But strength had been granted him never to lose heart utterly, and he had his reward. The weary years are behind him, and the scattered bands of Hebrew serfs are on the threshold of a new life. It was God's call to him at the beginning, and he has spite of all mistake and failure been faithful to the end.

Surely, no mere satisfaction of personal desires or attaining of selfish ends can begin to equal the satisfaction which comes to a soul that has been obedient to its own highest, and has left the world in some measure better for having lived. Carlyle says of such a life: "Oh, it is great! and there is no other greatness. To make some nook of God's creation a little fruitfuller, better, more worthy of God; to make some human hearts a little wiser, manfuller, happier,—more blessed, less accursed! It is work for a God." ("Past and Present," last page.)

IV. What the Story may suggest to us.

1. The splendid satisfaction which can bless life with the sense of peace and the vision of the glory which is yet to come is in us, as in our story, born only of years of loyal obedience, and sometimes as the outcome of what seems as we travel only too like a wilderness journey. The way to the high places of life is no easy or selfish one. "We can only have the highest happiness by having much feeling for the rest of the world as well as for ourselves. If you mean to act nobly and seek to know the best things God has put within reach of men, you

must learn to fix your mind on that end, and not on what will happen to you because of it." (George Eliot, end of "Romola.")

2. The future is full of limitless promise to those who have made noble use of the past. In a real sense, Moses had vision of the land of promise to gladden him ere he died because his whole past had been one long experience of the power of resolute righteous life. The man who is a pessimist is usually one who has centred himself on his own selfish happiness, and not learned to be lifted out of himself by the growing life around him. He who has learned to look for it and to live by it finds light dawning always and everywhere out of darkness. What the world is to us is very largely what we are to the world.

3. Let the picture carry us into a noble atmosphere. A touch of the heroic to which our souls can respond meets us in this legend dear to Israel eight-and-twenty centuries ago. There is something new as it is old in this picture of the man of the desert setting his hand to the work which to him was the work of God, and able at the end to look back on it with the satisfaction born of right nobly done. He was only a child of a superstitious age, born in an ignorant world, working among uncivilized people. But he made even then the grand discovery that life only tastes well to those who fill it with some great purpose in face of which the mere happenings which break down selfish men seem as little things.

4. Ask what it meant for Israel, for the world, to have this heroic picture before it as a fine human ideal all through the centuries. See what use the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes of it. (Heb. xi. 23 to 29.) Remember that, after all, in its fundamental truths, human experience varies little, and that the laws which made the retrospect of life glorious to Moses and filled him with delight as he looked to days to come are the inevitable laws under which we also live.

Lesson VIII.

DAVID SPARES SAUL.

NOW Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David. And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet. Now David and his men were abiding in the innermost parts of the cave. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. But David checked his men, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. And Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth, and did obeisance. And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearkenest thou to men's words saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee, though thou huntest after my soul to take it. And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rendered unto me good, whereas I have rendered unto thee evil.

DAVID SPARES SAUL.

I. The Two Davids.

When we attempt to make a concrete picture of the man from the records of the Old Testament, we are at once met with the difficulty that it seems impossible to reconcile the divergent features. The David of many of the narratives in Samuel is a man of his time,—cruel, often crafty and deceitful, superstitious in his religion. The David of Chronicles, on the other hand, is a godly man, after the type of the later Jewish idea of piety. The David who could be supposed to have written the Psalms, moreover, is still further removed from the David of Samuel even than this.

It is only when we look at the Old Testament books with careful scrutiny that these difficulties disappear. As we have seen, they are not books in our modern sense, written each as a whole by one author, but, rather, collections of tradition and history belonging to different times and reflecting different ideas.

We find this clear even within the limits of the books of Samuel. The two accounts of Saul's first acquaintance with David or the two stories of the death of Goliath obviously represent two different strands of the tradition about David. We have in Samuel a collection of David stories, some of them early and reliable, some of them less so. Sometimes we have two versions of the same incident.

In Chronicles, which, as we have seen, was placed at the very end of the Hebrew Bible, we have a picture of David as it seemed to a godly man of the second temple that the ideal king of Israel must have been.

"Early Old Testament Narratives," lessons xxvii.—xxx., gives fuller illustration of these points.

II. The Historical David.

Obviously, when we wish to find what type of man David really was, we have to set on one side the later picture which sets before us the author of the Psalms,—a man after the heart of the later Jewish piety,—and sift the material in Samuel, so as to get at the earliest picture.

Here we find, as we should expect, that David is a man

of his time, with all its faults and more than his share of its virtues. It was an age of which the best picture we have is contained in the stories preserved for us in the book of Judges. Palestine is only half settled by the Israelites, whose very existence is still in constant danger from the inhabitants of the land, and especially from the warlike Philistines.

Religion is in many ways extremely primitive. David himself believes in divination by the ephod, and in the idea that Jahweh's presence on the battlefield goes along with the sacred ark. That the scent of burning sacrifice may win God's favor is taken for granted. Of spiritual religion in any later sense there is none.

Warfare is barbarous in the extreme. David relentlessly puts to death with appalling cruelty his prisoners of war.

There is no real national unity. Saul is the first king over the still only half-united tribes. David, at first one of Saul's body-guard, has at length to flee because of his master's not unnatural jealousy. He becomes a popular hero, not unlike the Robin Hood of English story. In the hills there gather to him a band of men whose loyalty never seems to have failed him. He wages private war against the Philistines, comes to be looked upon as a national deliverer by the people, and on Saul's death makes Jerusalem—which he had by his own prowess taken from the Jebusites—his capital when the people gather as one man to take him as their king.

He united Israel, crushed the power of the Philistines, and made Israel a nation. Ever after men looked on his time as the period of national greatness, and, as the years passed, pictured the king of their golden age with ever-brighter colors.

No man could accomplish such a task as the creating of a united nation out of scattered clans, jealous each of the other as they were and all of them almost at the mercy of their enemies, without qualities of the highest order. With such the David of the earliest records was richly dowered.

III. Our Lesson.

Here we have an instance of the chivalrous spirit which goes not infrequently with men of the wild outlaw type, such as David at this time was.

The incident comes to us in two forms. In chapter xxvi., in spite of many differences of detail, we have a still earlier version of how David spared the life of the king who sought to

kill him. Both stories go back to the earliest records of David and Saul.

We must remember that to have taken his opportunity and killed his enemy would not in those times have been looked upon as anything more than a clever use of opportunity. But in David we have something more. He used to be one of Saul's body-guard. He could not forget the kindlier qualities of bygone days. The chance of deliverance is put into his hands. But, in face of the counsel of the loyal men who were risking their lives with his, David is true to an innate natural chivalry, which, after all, is close akin to the very best kind of religion.

Note, too, how his conduct wakens in response the nobler man in Saul. The sullen, revengeful spirit, which had grown upon him like a disease, passes away; and we have once more the younger Saul, who was the delight of all about him, so that they made him king.

IV. Points for Consideration.

1. The growth of the stories about David shows us clearly how rude and primitive times slowly evolve toward nobler ideals. Discuss the contrasted pictures of David in Samuel and Chronicles. Look for the fine qualities and the defects of each.

2. There seems little of what later days called religion in David's time. There is nothing at all about religion in that sense in our lesson. Is this so? Is there not a great deal of the universal religion of human goodness in the story? Where would David, in spite of the ignorance, superstition, and cruelty of his times, stand, if judged by that standard?

3. How does revengefulness react on others? Contrast the result of generous conduct. What does Jesus say about it?

Lesson IX.

THE HEROES OF THE WELL.

AND three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam; and the troop of the Philistines were encamped in the valley of Rephaim. And David was then in the hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: but he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD. And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: shall I drink the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it.

II. SAMUEL, chapter twenty-three.

THE HEROES OF THE WELL.

I. Origin of the Incident.

Even a superficial glance at these last chapters of 2 Samuel shows us their varied nature. The narrative runs on from the end of chapter xx. to 1 Kings i. 1. Again xxi. 14 is continued in xxiv. 1. In chapter xxii. we have Psalm xviii., and in xxiii. 1-7 another poetical fragment, both of them of late date and born of the same circle of ideas which gave rise to the David of Chronicles. Moreover, these two passages break the thread of xxi. 15-22, which is continued in xxiii. 8-39. The whole forms a kind of appendix to Samuel, which was added to it only after the books of Samuel and Kings were separated, at a date much later than Deuteronomy.

The passage from which our lesson is taken seems itself to have been compiled. When we read it through, we are puzzled as to the "three" and the "thirty," and still more puzzled to understand how the number thirty-seven in verse thirty-nine is arrived at.

It seems not impossible that we have here in somewhat altered form the conclusion of the "David book," from which a good deal of the story in Samuel comes.

In any case, right alongside a post-exilic Psalm and with it, interrupting the original Samuel narrative, we have one of the finest reminiscences of the hero king.

II. David's Charm for the People about him.

We saw in last lesson something of the times and work of David. Here, too, we have one of the stories which help us to understand why the people loved him and were willing to follow him as they did.

The whole atmosphere is quite different from that of later days, when the Jews were rather a church than a nation. We are in the air of an eager, liberty-loving people, impatient of restraint, not yet able to endure even the settled authority without which national life was impossible.

Among them there springs up this strong-handed champion of the oppressed clansman. He is out of favor at court. Saul pursuing him. But, when the Philistines raid the land and

the settlers have to leave their little farms for the hills, David is the man to deliver them. Secure in rocky strongholds, he gathers about him a band of patriots. True it is that they live by plunder, but there is a sort of rough justice even in this; for do they not repay more than they take in the security their prowess wins?

The romance of that life among the hills, now in flight before Saul, now like a whirlwind descending on the unsuspecting Philistine, all of it centring round their romantic leader, must have been the one all-fascinating topic round the fire at night in every village among the hills.

David's personal power over the men about him was the secret of his success. He was brave enough to be a natural leader of brave men. Chivalrous enough to win their admiration. Good and free and generous, ever against the strong and on the side of the weak, he was still one of themselves. We are compelled to think of him as one of those vital, fearless souls, full to overflowing with an almost frolicsome courage, who never forgot a friend or failed to respond to a clansman's cry for help.

It is from the countless tales of that free, brave life that the little incident of the lesson comes, telling us how his followers loved their leader.

III. The Heroism of the Story.

How often David must have wearied of the incessant homeless wandering among the rocks! Bethlehem, his home village, was closed to him. Life itself was precarious, only possible by incessant vigilance. In some such hour when in height of summer the Philistines hemmed them in, and even water was scarce, the well by the village comes to his mind. Little does he think how, when night fell, three of his followers, obedient to his chance words of longing, would slip away through the hills, run the gauntlet of the Philistine host, and, sword in hand, drive off the little Philistine garrison of Bethlehem, so that ere the dawn came they might gratify their leader's wish.

Do we not feel the greatness of the man as he pours the water on the ground? Water so bought is too sacred for him to use. He dedicates it to Jahweh of war hosts, who alone can be worthy to receive such an offering.

IV. Heroism and National Life.

What a power such stories have! In that long struggle against overwhelming odds which forms the history of Israel

under the Judges and David, deeds like this must have been like iron in the blood of men. One can still feel one's pulses run faster as one reads. What if Bethlehem lay right at our doors, and the cave of Adullam close at hand among the hills above us, and the marks of the cruelty of the Philistines was a memory still fresh in the minds of the elders!

Call other instances to mind. Marathon and Thermopylæ were an undying inspiration to those who loved the liberties of Greece. The naval supremacy of England was born of the stimulus of the men who wrested her dominion from Spain in this same spirit that did not know what it was to count the enemy. Our own tales of the war of independence should stir us in like fashion. How much finer it is than the calculating temper which intrigues and plans and plans, but draws back when liberty and right call for heroism!

V. Suggestions.

1. Analyze heroism. It is not mere animal courage. We may find courage in natures of the lowest order. The bully and the prize-fighter have it. Heroism is the power to forget personal danger and selfish interests in the presence of some high motive. The true heroism of these men springs from the devotion to their leader of which the brave deed was born.

Take the quieter heroisms. Is it not heroic to give up all that men most value rather than be disloyal to truth? Paul's heroism, as soon as he became convinced of the truth of the Christ life, the heroism of Jesus setting his face to go to Jerusalem rather than to be disloyal to his message, are noble instances.

2. Dwell on the devotion these rough mountaineers showed to their leader. How fine life feels, when it is inspired with that kind of loyalty! Is not comradeship of that quality the Christian ideal? What if it were to become universal?

Lesson X.

NABOTH'S VINEYARD.

AHAB, the king, coveted the vineyard of Naboth. At the instigation of Jezebel, the queen, Naboth was falsely accused, and stoned to death :

And Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it. And the word of the LORD came to Elijah, the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab, king of Israel, which dwelleth in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to take possession of it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? and thou shalt speak unto him, saying, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will utterly sweep thee away, and will cut off from Ahab every man child, and him that is shut up and him that is left at large in Israel: and I will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and hast made Israel to sin.

NABOTH'S VINEYARD.

I. Source of the Story.

The two books of Kings as we now have them were originally one with the books of Samuel. We saw in last lesson that the present appendix at the end of 2 Samuel does not belong there. The whole used to be called the four books of the kingdom, and formed one large compilation. What we have said as to the composition of Samuel thus holds good of Kings. But in this latter case the compiler's hand is often more clear. Turn to the book, and note the regular formula with which he commences and ends each reign. In between these opening and closing phrases of the compiler (who wrote after and in the spirit of Deuteronomy) we have matter of various kinds and from different sources.

When we look at the chapter from which the lesson is taken and then at those which precede and follow it, we see at once that chapter xx. interrupts the narrative. It is continued in chapter xxii., while the chapter before us continues and belongs to chapter xix. It is interesting to find, when we turn to the Greek Bible (the Septuagint), that this true order is followed there.

Our story forms part of a brilliant and very graphic account of Elijah which has been preserved to us in the book of Kings. We only have fragments of it, as its sudden beginning (1 Kings xvii. 1) suggests. The original little history must have spoken of many things to which, as we have it, it merely refers. But the portions we have are of the highest interest.

Refer to "Old Testament Narratives," lessons xxxiii.-xxxv., for details, and, if possible, to the article on the book of Kings in the Encyclopædia Britannica. See also hints of another version of the story of Naboth in 2 Kings ix. 25, 26.

II. Elijah and Ahab.

What a sense of power the little narrative carries with it! It is, however, weakened in its present form by later additions. One (the phrase, "thus saith the LORD" in verse 19) we have omitted. The other is the close of our extract. If after "O mine enemy" we pass at once to verses 27-29, which seem to

have followed it in the original account, the intense dramatic force of the original is recovered.

What a power the righteous indignation of Elijah is! How Ahab, king of the Northern Kingdom though he is, cowers before it! Yet Elijah has no authority save that he knows within himself that he has a divine message.

Compare the scene with that in which Nathan faces David, or, later, Amos comes forth in the royal sanctuary in Samaria. (2 Samuel xii., Amos vii.)

III. The Religious Value of the Incident.

We are still dealing with records of a time when religion is very crude in its form. Men, it is true, are beginning to separate more clearly the worship of Jahweh, God of Israel, from that of the Baals. But the air is full of portent and miracle and superstition. We have to remove these elements from the story before we can picture to ourselves the personality of Elijah as he really was. The massacre of the priests of Baal in the name of Jahweh is full of brutality. In spite of all that David accomplished, the national life, split into two on Solomon's death, is half savage, both in its social order and in its religion.

Through all this we find clear traces of the growth of that religion which is independent of the forms of worship or culture. We can watch the increasing power of the consciousness that the man of God is a messenger of righteousness. Not so long after Elijah comes Amos with his cry, "I hate, I despise, your feast days." "Hate the evil, love the good, establish judgment in the gate."

We come right to the heart of the matter when we find in Israel the ever-growing sense that God is against unrighteousness, even though it be the unrighteousness of a king.

IV. The Prophet.

We have in the incident before us something like a true sense of what a Hebrew prophet was. In earlier days he was a diviner, or soothsayer, who for pay would consult the oracle. Even Samuel had not wholly risen above this level. (1 Samuel ix.) Now the prophet begins to stand forth as a man with a divine sense of justice as his one authority. Alongside the development of the form of religion which gives us the various strata of the Pentateuch, which we considered in our first lesson, we have this splendid growth of the idea of religion as right conduct between man and man. Later lessons will show us more fully

how this rose to a finer and nobler thought still. The prophets were the exponents of this ever-expanding standard of righteousness.

Elijah is in the instance before us, in spite of the legendary character of much that we read about him, a true forerunner of the great preachers of national righteousness, who more than any others brought to its full power what has been well called the Hebrew genius for religion. What Greece did for art and Rome for social order, the people of Israel did for religion. But it was not through the ritual they developed or the codes they elaborated. It was in the profound interpretation of the religious element in men that they won their place. The prophets were the men who made it possible. In the indomitable courage born of the sense of right, Elijah truly belongs to them.

V. Suggested Topics.

1. Consider what it meant for the nation to have constantly before them, as a part of their national tradition, a picture like this. Though but dimly realized and crudely understood, it is the divine in a man which gives him power. Ahab is no king in the story. He is a prisoner at the bar. The king is Elijah, born of no royal house, heir to no prerogatives, but mighty in the power of that which alone makes men great. It is not for nothing that a tradition like this stands among the treasures of Israel's history.

2. Contrast Elijah in his conflict with the priests of Baal (1 Kings xviii.) with Elijah in this incident. Which is the greater? Which most truly religious?

3. What in our life and experience corresponds to that which makes us feel that Elijah was a great man. How do we most truly judge of greatness? What has religion to do with it?

Lesson XI.

THE NEW COVENANT.

BEHOLD, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel. And this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, saith the LORD; I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever; for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

JEREMIAH, chapters thirty-one and thirty-two.

THE NEW COVENANT.

I. Historical Survey.

More than three hundred years have elapsed since the times with which we were concerned in last lesson. The age of David lies on the far horizon four centuries past. The nation which he welded together divided into Judah and Israel on the death of the tyrant Solomon. The Northern Kingdom has fallen a prey to Assyria. The form of religion has greatly changed. In 621 all the old sanctuaries were abolished; and Jerusalem was made, by royal edict, the only place where men could offer sacrifice. Judah is in her death throes. In the terrible grapple between Egypt to the south and Babylon moving against it from the north, Judah is bound to lose her national existence. The reform of worship has not availed. The king Josiah, who brought it about, has perished in battle against the Egyptian army. The fate of Israel lies at Judah's door.

II. Jeremiah.

It is under terrible conditions like these that Jeremiah writes. His book, unlike the historical collections which we have been studying, is, as a whole, a trustworthy record from his own hand of his life and work.

Much as he loved his country, it was impossible for him to stand on the side of those who were stirring the people on to a vain contest. The inevitable is plain to him. The old idea, that Jahweh will not suffer the city of his sanctuary to fall, is no longer true in the face of wider facts. Righteousness is good, but even righteousness will not avail against the overwhelming march of history.

He was a sensitive soul, torn with grief at his country's fate. Persecuted for lack of patriotism, holding his life in his hand because of his clearly seen convictions, no cruelty could silence his voice, upraised for submission. Even to-day he carries the slur of the title "the weeping prophet."

Refer for details to lesson viii. in "The Story of Israel."

III. His Message.

We have seen that almost from the beginning the idea that

Jahweh loves righteousness was the burden of religion in Israel. But, as time went on, the right service of God came to be more a matter of ritual than of conduct. Amos and Isaiah have both protested, it is true, against any such idea. Yet, as an outcome of the very movement which owed its power to them, the reform of worship rather than the reform of conduct was that which Josiah carried out.

Moreover, so far, religion has been a merely national thing to Israel. If they truly serve Jahweh, he, in turn, will protect them and make them prosperous.

Now the facts force Jeremiah to take deeper ground. He loses faith altogether in the covenant which Deuteronomy tried to carry out. He is forced to the conclusion that Jahweh stands for something wider than the God of Israel, and that her prosperity hinges on deeper movements than due observance of even the most careful ceremonial,

We are on the threshold of a most stupendous advance. In Jeremiah, born, as it were, of his having to face the darkest facts of the history of the nation he loved, we hear for the first time of religion as a thing of the spirit, and as therefore universal. True it is that not even he could fully carry out his own thought. But in the words quoted as our lesson we can trace clearly enough the splendid truths which they for the first time in Israel's history set forth as God's message. The law of God is the inward law of the spirit. Religion must be from within.

It is this which makes Jeremiah the greatest of the prophets. He had vision of truths so large that they did not come to full utterance again till they won fresh power from the lips of Jesus, six hundred years later.

IV. The Advance.

We can now see clearly how far we have travelled. We began with a people just beginning to have some faint sense of unity in their worship of their common God. He is only one among the many gods of many nations, and his chief claim to Israel's reverence is that he is more powerful than other deities. Worship is propitiation, that the worshipper may win Jahweh's favor.

Underneath it all is the rude sense that justice, at least between fellow-countrymen, is what Jahweh demands. Little by little men have come to feel that Jahweh worship must be

purified from the stain of the wild license which was only too common in connection with early religious festivals. Alongside that there grew up a stronger insistence on right conduct. A greater kindness and a higher standard of morality have arisen.

Of anything like a universal standpoint in religion, we have as yet had nothing. A standpoint as high as that which confronts us here is far removed. Even Jeremiah seems to have builded better than he knew. He himself could hardly think out the new truths he was shadowing forth.

V. Religion is of the Heart.

Even after centuries of Christianity, such a truth as this is hardly grasped. Religion has been a matter of creed or ceremonial. The "plan of salvation" has been something intrusted to a few, and open to those only who believed according to a stated pattern. That good men would be "saved" in spite of their opinions is still a heresy with only too many. To hold that there is hope for the heathen, provided they live up to the best they know, still shuts men out from missionary work among them. To follow out Jeremiah's thought would lift us far above such a position. Although he does not draw the inference, the new covenant is the promise of a time when knowledge of God as the power of life within *is* religion.

VI. Religion is Natural and Universal.

In another splendid passage Jeremiah carries out the inevitable conclusion from his declaration that religion is of the heart, and the law of God the inner law of the highest human promptings. In viii. 7 he compares this inner law to the instincts which lead the birds southward when the winter comes. The inward prompting of God is inherent in human nature. Then, inevitably, God is the God of all men; and all men are his children. The future lies not in the fall or rise of Israel, but in the coming of humanity to its true heritage.

What a splendid outlook this opens up! God, the power behind all unfolding life, leading men everywhere to come to know their true nature, and to find, in obedience to it, the true life and the true religion. Jeremiah opens the way to thoughts like these.

Lesson XII.

GOD'S HIGHWAY.

PREPARE ye in the wilderness the way of the LORD, make level in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Lift up your eyes on high and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and for that he is strong in power, not one is lacking.

Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.

GOD'S HIGHWAY.

I. The Thread of the Story.

In last lesson we saw how Jeremiah, losing all faith in the covenant of Deuteronomy which Josiah made the law of the land in 621, and seeing the inevitable fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Chaldeans, looked forward to a time when religion should become a thing of the spirit.

In 587 Jerusalem was destroyed, and the population of Judæa carried as captives to Babylon.

Forty years later the whole Eastern world is stirred by the appearance of Cyrus, the Persian king. He mastered Media. Then in 546 conquered Cræsus of Lydia, and made a movement toward Babylon. In 539 he captured Babylon, and ended the Babylonian empire.

The Jewish captives hailed him as their deliverer, and he soon gave them permission to return to their beloved Jerusalem. In 536 many of them returned. But it was not till 444 that the Jews were firmly established there as the people of the law, which was elaborated during the captivity.

Use a map, and for details refer to the lessons ix.-xvi. in "The Story of Israel."

II. The Exile.

For convenience let us regard it as the period from the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 to the establishment of the Jewish Church in 444. We may call it a period of one hundred and fifty years. Roughly, fifty years elapsed from the destruction of the city to the edict of Cyrus permitting the return. It took about a century more before the religious plans which gave rise to Judaism were carried out. During this long time momentous changes took place in the development of the religion of Israel. Ezekiel drew up his picture of what religion ought to be. Then later some one elaborated the system of religious ordinances which we have in Leviticus xvii.-xxvi. (the Law of Holiness). Finally, under Ezra and Nehemiah in 444 what we have called the priestly law book was made the law of the restored community.

It was during this period, too, that JE and D were combined, Judges, Samuel, and Kings edited, and, finally, the great collection of prophetic writings from which our lesson comes written and gathered together.

The people were not prisoners. They settled in Babylonia and prospered. The indifferent among them lost all desire to return to the land of their fathers. To the genuinely religious the calamity of exile only served to deepen and mature faith.

All this was a slow process. How far away 1750 seems to us! Yet the fall of Jerusalem was just as far off to those who established the law under Ezra.

III. The Author of our Lesson.

As we know, the lesson is taken from the book of Isaiah. That book is really a collection of many writings. What Isaiah wrote lies in the first thirty-nine chapters, and is earlier than Deuteronomy. Chapters xl.-lv. come in the main from an anonymous writer who lived in the time when the appearance of Cyrus rouses hopes of deliverance in the hearts of the exiled Jews. The hopelessness which the destruction of Jahweh's city and his holy place forty years before had caused is passing away. A deeper thought of Jahweh as the one and only God in whose hands are all the nations of the earth has taken possession of men like the author of our lesson. Cyrus is hailed as Jahweh's messenger. Deliverance and a new life in the old home are at hand.

IV. The Highway in the Wilderness.

The prophet is lifted by his passionate hope above earthly conditions. He dreams of Jahweh's highway for his returning people. Hills are levelled. Valleys are filled up. It is God's great wonderful road back to the old homes.

Then he draws for us a glorious picture of God, no longer like the limited national God of early days, but the ruler of the hosts of heaven, "the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth."

The return to the old city when it came to pass was in fact very different. But this does not take away from the value of this immortal picture of God's highway, and we still use the words of our lesson to tell of our own thought of God.

V. The Advance.

What a long way we have travelled from the primitive thought of Jahweh, who was God of Israel, just as Chemosh was

God of Moab, who climbed down from heaven by a ladder, and ate and talked with Abraham! Far as we still are from the conception of God as the infinite and eternal energy revealed in all the universe in ever higher and higher forms till we know him as Father of men who understand him only as little children can, we have come vastly nearer it.

VI. Suggestions.

Trace the rising tide of conquest under Cyrus as we read it in Herodotus, for instance. It was the same tide which in 480 threatened to overwhelm Greece, and was rolled back by the heroism of Thermopylæ. Then look at our lesson as showing us from the inside what it meant to this unknown prophet of the exile. Set the lesson beside the Greek thought of the Gods, that we may feel how truly it is one of the great passages from the Bible. Let the sense of contact with what is called secular history help us to feel the touch of intense reality through which alone we can appreciate the real value of the prophet's thought.

Dwell on the influence of the exile in almost forcing men to think in nobler and truer fashion of the God of Israel. The destruction of Jerusalem helped to make impossible the thought of him as limited to a certain locality. It winnowed the careless and indifferent from those to whom religion was something dear almost as life itself. It widened the horizon of events. It was the march of history which made possible to those who reflected the thought of our lesson.

Use this in relation to our own life. It is sometimes those things which are hardest in our experience which contribute most to our real growth. Burroughs says, "It is generally some obstacle or hindrance which makes a deep place in a creek as in a brave life."

Use the picture of the highway to suggest the divine road out of the captivity of ignorance to the unseen future of freedom and truth which Jesus called the kingdom of God. No obstacles can hinder the making of God's road to the more perfect days to come. The thought of it may be a constant inspiration to us. We, too, may share in bringing in that fairer future.

Lesson XIII.

THE BRINGER OF GOOD TIDINGS.

HOW beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! The voice of thy watchmen! They lift up the voice, together do they sing; for they shall see, eye to eye, how the LORD returneth to Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing: go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the LORD. For ye shall not go out in haste, neither shall ye go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rearward.

ISAIAH, chapter fifty-two.

THE BRINGER OF GOOD TIDINGS.

I. Recall the Historical Situation.

For forty years the Jews had been settled in Babylonia. Many of them were prosperous colonists. They probably formed little communities of settlers by themselves. Some of them were doubtless well at ease, found Babylon a better home than Jerusalem had ever been. But, among these were many in whom the passionate love of country and of the days to come when Jahweh should again rule over his people in the city of their fathers grew only more keen as time passed. "The past will always win a glory from its being far"; and so to these earnest souls the life in God's city never seemed so fair as now, when all that is left of it is the pile of lonely ruins beyond the trackless desert.

Think what is meant for the rising generation to live in the atmosphere of the glory and the hope of Israel. The stories of the fathers, the glamour of the days of David the good king, the record of that earlier deliverance of God's people from Egyptian bondage, are now in exile full of fresh interest and power. We catch something of it even to-day in the appeal of Hebrews xi. What if those men battling for their land, their religion, and liberty, were our own fathers?

Now on every hand there are tokens that the iron strength of Babylon is waning. A mightier power, Cyrus, is overturning kingdom after kingdom. It will soon be Babylon's turn, and then deliverance may be at hand. The writers of the lesson passages greeted him as Jahweh's servant sent to set his people free. As rumor follows rumor, as at length from far Lydia comes the word of the fall of Sardis (see map), faith bursts into passionate song. In our lesson to-day we have one of these beautiful bursts of religious hope kindled into poetry.

II. The Writer.

It is interesting to note that in these great chapters of the prophecy of the return (xl.-lv.) we have the work of at least three unnamed writers. The writer of the last passage

is not the author of this; while alongside their work we have from still another hand the wonderful picture of the glory which is to come through Jahweh's suffering servant (xlii. 1-4, xlix. 1-6, lii. 13-liii. 12). We are dealing with no isolated experience, but with an inspiration which thrilled many hearts. What has come down to us, moreover, is only the best known portion of what arose in those days like a great tide of rejoicing and hope.

It has been conjectured that the writer of the song of deliverance of which our lesson forms the third and fourth verses did not live in Babylon, but possibly in northern Phœnicia. The suggestion helps to give meaning to the passage.

III. The Picture.

The writer is looking as it were at the ruins of the city. Possibly he remembered as a child the glory of its pride when temple and palace still stood within the great defending walls, and the streets were crowded with the rich life of God's people in God's city. Now the people are far away. Among the ruins a few of the lowest eke out a scanty subsistence.

As the writer looks, over the hills from the East comes the messenger of Jahweh. Longfellow's "God is still God" may voice for us his message.

The poor, hopeless folk among the waste places of the city are summoned to listen to the watchmen, to watch with them and break into song. Even the ruins are to join in the chorus of joy. For Jahweh is coming back to the old home, and his people with him.

Then the writer turns to the exiles homeward bound. At their head is Jahweh himself, in their midst the bearers of the sacred vessels, possibly those which had belonged to the old temple. But it is no hurried flight in the darkness, as it was in the night of deliverance from Egypt. Jahweh leads and Jahweh guards the rear. It is a procession of triumphant return. The long years of sojourning in a strange land are over.

IV. What may it mean to us?

Obviously, the picture is only a poet's dream. But the dream of the true poet is the inspiration which creates achievement. It was of songs like these that the actual heroism of the return was born.

Not only so, moreover; for the song has been the strength and inspiration century after century of men who even in dark-

est hours were lifted by it into new enthusiasm. To those who love God and truth there come times when it is hard to see how the glorious future of faith is possible. Then these words have power. There are watchmen on the hills seeing afar off, and singing because of what they see. God cannot fail. The building of the future is in his hands. Out of the ruins of the past it arises with certainty. The march out of bondage is no hurried flight. God orders it. It is sure, inevitable, majestic, with the majesty of the Eternal.

The call of those who see deepest into the heart of things is always and everywhere the call of this old Hebrew poet to play our part and take our place in the power of the hope which is limitless as God is limitless.

V. Suggestions.

Any dream we have of good days to come is inevitably different from the reality. Yet the dream is a power.

As illustrations, take Rousseau's dreams of the "noble savage" and the glorious "state of nature." Foolish and unreal as they seem to us, they were yet the forces of which the deliverance of France was born.

Among ourselves, dreams like Bellamy's "Looking Backward" and Morris's "News from Nowhere" are, when we come to try them at the bar of the practicable, possibly as unreal and visionary as this song. Yet in them man's hope of a society where wrong shall be less and justice and liberty more voices itself. The real justice and liberty, as they come, come by the slow ways of the unfolding of human nature. But the inspiration to work and wait and never to lose heart is born of the dream.

Apply this to the individual life. Think of the power of ideals. Often impossible, sometimes absurd, they are still the power which keeps us eager and alert, as we come nearer and ever nearer to the reality of which the dream was so imperfect a foreshadowing.

As this vision was a power to quicken men into practical heroism like that of Ezra, so may the dreams it stirs in us find expression in more strenuous endeavour to play our part under the conditions of our own life.

Lesson XIV.

HO, EVERY ONE THAT THIRSTETH!

HO, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not cut off.

HO, EVERY ONE THAT THIRSTETH!

I. The Author's Situation.

Jerusalem was destroyed in 586. As we have seen, the religious activity of the next forty years centred around the collecting of the annals of past days and the building of plans for the return. In the last two lessons we had before us passages full of the inspiration which the appearance of Cyrus kindled. The time for home-coming is close at hand.

In 436 a great company of devoted patriots returned to the sacred city. Their lot was a hard one. Not for twenty years were they able, even with the support of their brethren in Babylonia, to rebuild the temple. The ideal church which men dreamed of in captivity was not formed till 444, nearly a century after the first return.

During all this long time the Jews in Babylon were not impassive. Out of their prosperity under Persian rule they seem continually to have helped those who had returned to Jerusalem. It was, indeed, by the pressure they were able to bring to bear on the Persian court that the great reform under Ezra and Nehemiah was possible. (See "The Story of Israel," lessons xiii. to xv.)

But the contrast between the lot of the little community in Jerusalem and their prosperous brethren in Babylonia was striking. Even the scanty light we have on those years spent in trying to restore the city of their fathers reveals to us a terrible struggle with circumstances of the greatest difficulty. It was no easy matter to forsake the easy and prosperous life in the rich Euphrates valley for the sake of a religious ideal.

The danger that the thought of returning will grow ever fainter in the minds of the people of Jahweh presses. Our prophet is one of those who in this state of matters writes to kindle anew the fire of national and religious zeal. A diviner future is opening. Not in vain have those who returned endured and toiled and overcome. Will not you, too, while the time is still here, cast in your lot with the unfolding purposes of Israel and Israel's God?

To fix a precise date is impossible. But the writer lives in Babylon, and seems to have in view a reinforcement of the movement for the realization of Israel's ideal destiny, which centred in the prosperity of the community in Jerusalem.

II. The Message.

The alternative before him is that between the prosperous, worldly life which Babylon offers and the life under the inspiration of religious and national ideals which appeals in the Jerusalem community for participation and support.

To him the Babylon life, far from the presence of Jahweh and without part in the work of the struggling community in Jerusalem, is spending money for that which cannot satisfy the soul. There, free to all who will take part in it, God is offering life,—the life of noble ideals and splendid inspiration. Better far to share in the opening out of God's plans for his people than to live on in an alien land as outsiders and exiles. It is the old choice of which the Epistle to the Hebrews tells, when it speaks of Moses as "choosing rather to be evil entreated with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin."

Then he passes on to the magnificent passage which says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith Jahweh." Look at things as they seem in the light of a divine purpose, not from the standpoint of your own selfish ease.

The passage closes with the splendid picture of the result to those who choose to stand out for God and religion and the ideal future. The way may seem hard and the sacrifice great; but, nevertheless, "the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing."

III. The Underlying Truth which endures.

It is in no unworthy sense that a message like this has been regarded as prophetic of the gospel which Jesus preached. It is so because it is true to the finest things in human experience.

In the Fourth Gospel, especially, we hear the same tones again and again. Jesus offers the living water to the woman at the well. He is the bread of life. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," are his words. "If a man would come after me, he must deny himself." The kingdom of God is as when a king made a mar-

riage feast for his son. "What shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

In words like these we cannot but recognize the message which in relation to the circumstances of his own time the anonymous writer in the exile delivered to his fellows in Babylon. Their value lies not in their application to the choice immediately before him, but to the universal alternative between what is immediately easy or pleasant and that which often at present sacrifice or self-denial makes for profound and lasting satisfaction.

It is this fact which justifies the allegorical use of concrete messages, like that before us. Captivity to self, to ignorance, to ease, to evil habit, is part of every-day human experience. The ideal life of character, of obedience to right, the rule of the divine, the kingdom of God, is to all of us the open alternative. It is this universal application that makes the call of our lesson part of the eternal scripture of the world.

IV. Suggestions.

Dwell on the fact that human progress is from the satisfaction of the near and immediate impulses of our nature to those which are more remote. The chief needs of the savage are the satisfaction of his bodily wants. As he grows through the centuries, he finds that this is not the chief good. He develops higher faculties calling for higher satisfaction, demanding it, if life is to have real value, until the lower are almost matters of indifference. Honor to the ideal soldier is more than life. Art to the true artist is so pre-eminently first that all else is set aside in its favor. "Man shall not live by bread alone," is a truth of universal human experience. It is what he is, not what he has, that gives value to a man's life.

Note, too, that in proportion to his experience of the chief good is the desire to share it. All fine life is a message of good news. One's own highest good is not perfect till it is also the highest good of others. Universal brotherhood is the last word in life as in religion. We find our real life only as we further it in others. The prophet's burden is the result of high experience.

Lesson XV.

GOOD DAYS COMING.

HEAR this ye rulers that abhor judgment. They judge for reward and the priests teach for hire, and the prophets divine for money. Therefore shall Zion be ploughed as a field and Jerusalem become heaps.

But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and the peoples shall flow unto it. And he shall judge between many peoples, and shall reprove strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

МІСАН, chapters three, four, and six.

GOOD DAYS COMING.

I. The Book of Micah.

In Jeremiah xxvi. 18 we have a most interesting reference to Micah and a direct quotation from his writings (Mic. iii. 12). From this, more surely than from the heading of the book, we learn that Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah, and declared during the reign of Hezekiah the coming downfall of Samaria and of Jerusalem.

The collection of passages of which the book which bears Micah's name is made up is very interesting as an illustration of the way in which the books of the Old Testament were compiled. Chapters i.-iii. are all that certainly belong to Micah himself; though even here, in chapter i., verses 12 and 13 obviously belong to a very much later time and to utterly different circumstances.

In chapter iv. we have again work from a different hand. It is a vision of the future as it pictured itself to the eyes of some prophetic soul after the exile. The very passage we quote in the lesson occurs also in the book of Isaiah (Isa. ii. 2-4). No one knows who wrote it. Perhaps the very beauty which has made it so famous, even in our own time, is the reason why it has been preserved to us in two collections of the sayings of the prophets.

Then in chapters vi. and vii. we have another fragment of prophecy coming from some one who probably lived nearly half a century after the time of Hezekiah, in which Micah wrote.

Right at the end of the book, in vii. 7-20, we have a passage which, as soon as we read it, we see to belong to the circumstances and the time, full of the hope of the return from captivity, from which the selections in the last three lessons come.

Our lesson thus, though all of it taken from one little collection, contains fragments from three different sources. The first paragraph is from Micah; and part of it is quoted, as we have seen, by Jeremiah.

The second is a beautiful vision of the good days to come,

written by some unknown hand when the exile was over, and telling us of the undying hope which sustained the Jews through the dark times of their later history.

The third, again, is a wonderful early passage, showing how, even before the fall of Jerusalem, some noble soul was able to get at the very heart of religion.

II. Sin brings Disaster.

The great message of these early preachers is that religion is righteousness. There is no more scathing denunciation of the wrong which drags a nation down than we have in these early prophets, Amos, Hosea, Micah. Amplify the selection in our lesson by reading other passages from chapters ii. and iii. There is no true religion where unrighteousness prevails. Calamity is its inevitable result.

To the prophets this truth expressed itself in the coming overthrow of Samaria and later of Jerusalem at the hands of the approaching Assyrians and Babylonians. They had not yet learned what the book of Job so strongly sets forth, that external prosperity or adversity do not depend on righteousness. "Goodness is its own reward, evil its own punishment," is a thought beyond their horizon.

Their splendid keynote is that religion is righteousness, and they used the coming fall of their nation to enforce it.

III. What God requires.

The third paragraph of the lesson, coming probably out of the dark days of Manasseh after the kingdom of Israel had fallen, breathes the same message in the loftiest way. Like Amos and Isaiah, the writer sees clearly enough that ceremonial, however splendid, and sacrifice even of the most terrible character, the offering of children as sacrifices on the altar (vi. 7), are not what Jahweh demands. Compare passages like Isaiah i. 10-17 or Amos v. 21-24.

Then from this unknown hand comes one of the noblest messages of any prophet. In no religion, not even in that of the New Testament, do we find anything finer. Justice, love, reverence,—these are what God requires. This is the chief good.

IV. Good Days Coming.

When we read the story of the terrible struggle of the centuries which followed the return, nothing is more surprising than the indomitable hope which sustained the Jews. Because

God is God, light *shall* spring out of darkness. Nothing could take away that certainty. However impossible the form was in which it expressed itself, the vision is part of the undying heritage which we have from Israel.

The second paragraph of our lesson brings it to us. Part of it is not any longer possible. Jerusalem and her exaltation have no such meaning to us as they had to the men who faced starvation and death for their home city. But the closing sentence lives. War will lead to peace in the end. When men learn to live in the light of the noblest in them, bitterness and strife and war will give way to brotherhood. It is for this we pray in the Lord's prayer when we say, "Thy kingdom come." Just how it is to come no one can yet clearly see, any more than he who wrote the words before us. But that it must come in the end, and that all things are inevitably working toward it is the lesson of all history, as well as the certainty of those who most feel the possibilities of life.

V. Suggestions.

The class cannot well do less than commit to memory at least the final sentences of paragraphs two and three. Apart from their religious value, they are part of the heritage of every educated man.

Discuss the question raised by the opening sentences as to how far the fall of Israel could be said to be due to Israel's sin. Is the opposite of "righteousness exalteth a nation" true? Does unrighteousness lower it? In what sense? What are the rewards of goodness and what the real punishment of wrong-doing. Are these inevitable? What of "I myself am heaven and hell"?

What is the good side of war? Is "peace at any price" a bad motive? Would not eager and generous rivalry in the common endeavor to perfect the common life bring out all the qualities for the development of which war is praised?

Apply the last paragraph of the lesson to the question of the relation between religion as a ceremonial and religion itself. Is it well to neglect religious observances altogether because they are of no value in themselves? What is the true way? Apply the question, to ritualism or to church-going.

Lesson XVI.

THE GLORY OF WISDOM.

WISDOM is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: yea, with all thou hast gotten get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head a chaplet of grace: a crown of beauty shall she deliver to thee.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and none of the things thou canst desire are to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way securely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

PROVERBS, chapters three and four.

THE GLORY OF WISDOM.

I. Altered Conditions.

The national history of Israel has now become the history of a church. The law introduced under Ezra and Nehemiah is supreme. While by its very strictness of organized ceremonial it attained strength enough to survive in the struggle of succeeding dominations and to remain itself in spite of all foreign influences, that very source of strength cramped all initiative. Religion is settled, authoritative, and final. Under the succession of semi-political high priests it has become a splendid ritual, carrying itself along almost by the weight of its own history and habit.

Under the successors of Alexander the temple service is as yet undisturbed. The attempt to introduce Greek forms is still in the future. From the standpoint of the law all is well. But, as usually happens, the form has crushed inspiration. The protective armor of an elaborate and final authority in religion has cramped all the free life of the spirit. It is a prophecy of the later Roman Church. Its elaboration of ceremony and authoritative statement of faith enabled it to withstand the shock of the inroad of barbarism before which Rome fell. But it fossilized the human spirit. The dark ages are its result.

II. The Altered Spirit.

In this lesson we come in contact with something utterly different from all that we have been studying hitherto. Nothing can be further from the keen vigorous life of prophecy at its best. All the passion for righteousness which inspired men like Isaiah is lacking. The ideal future has faded. The interests of the national life which made the earlier centuries vital and quick has gone. In its place we have a careful, somewhat calculating spirit. The "native hue of resolution" is "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," even when the calculation rises to the level which we can fairly class as thought.

Religion is a matter of priests and sacrifice and enactment. Piety has taken refuge in the temple songs. The man of action cramped by the narrow limits of the law has settled down to the

wise ordering of the individual life. His tone is secular rather than religious.

Amid this we find the beginnings of speculation. Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus, Job, Wisdom, all take this new attitude. Prudential at its lowest, it rises at its highest to the splendid agnosticism of Job or to the idea of wisdom as that which orders the universe and voices itself in the human spirit.

Lessons vi. to xi. in "Great Thoughts of Israel" may be referred to for fuller details. The later development of this idea of wisdom into a philosophy will be treated in lesson xx. of the present series.

III. The Value of the Temper of our Lesson.

It is well that we are continually stirred by the high achievements of the human spirit when it kindles into the flame of heroism or rises to the inspiration of a passion for wider vision and liberty. All real advance is possible only through such temper of splendid initiative.

It is good, too, to keep constantly before us the high places of the spirit where religion forgets self in the thought of God or is lifted into the ideal realm of thought where all ills of the present are lost in vision of the glorious dawn of the kingdom of God.

But we must remember that the vast majority of men must live under the control of quiet, orderly, sober habits. It forms the larger part of every life. It is perhaps not ill that the word "crank" has come to be used in its present derogatory sense. The visionary is often the useless and the unpractical man. The wise man mistrusts his ecstasy and falls back on sober, calculating common sense. It is this common-sense ideal which regulates the world we live in.

Here we have the office of counsel like that of the book of Proverbs. Remember that life is not a matter of chance. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Experience is worth all the theory in the world. Learn to be wise. Order life so that it may bring those things which the lessons learned by others have proved to be good.

IV. The Glory of Wisdom.

In our lesson this attitude rises to its highest point. The wise man is he who has learned that satisfaction comes only to him who is master of himself. The man who acts on impulse quickly finds himself far astray. He who is led along by the delusion of mere outer success feeds on husks in the end. The

slave of his senses is a fool. He alone lives well who has learned to love wisdom. He it is who sees that only in obedience to what one knows to be a wise course is real profit. Wisdom is the principal thing.

All this means much. True though it is that the ideal lacks inspiration and does not rise to the thought of some unifying principle in the light of which failure may often be the highest success, it is still a right wise counsel. Judgment *is* better than impulse. The man who acts on well-formed habits *is* the man of quiet, enduring power. Length of days, riches and honor, the quiet, stable mind, *are* worth having. But they will not come to us by chance. Obedience to wise counsel, the habit of moving quietly on toward sure results, the path of steady moderation,—these are the factors on which a sure and lasting success must be based.

V. Other Statements of this Truth.

Æsop's fable of the hare and the tortoise may be cited. In the New Testament the parable of the unjust steward, lying as it does wholly outside the whole tenor of the teaching of Jesus, urges the same lesson. Whatever you do, do not be a fool. Even an unscrupulous fellow like the steward may teach us that. Aristotle's "virtue is the habit of choosing the relative mean" is somewhat along this same line. If you live by chance, on impulse, obedient only to what you like, you will fail. The ideal of the lesson is that of the man strong in wisely regulated life, obedient to his own quiet, balanced judgment. The best work of the world is done by men of this temper.

Lesson XVII.

THE GARDEN OF THE SLUGGARD.

I WENT by the field of the slothful,
And by the vineyard of the man void of under
standing;

And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns,
The face thereof was covered with nettles,
And the stone wall thereof was broken down.

Then I beheld, and considered well:

I saw, and received instruction.

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,

A little folding of the hands to sleep:

So shall thy poverty come as a robber;

And thy want as an armed man.

PROVERBS, chapter twenty-four

THE GARDEN OF THE SLUGGARD.

I. The Tone of the Book of Proverbs.

As we saw in last lesson, the whole attitude of this book is that of the practical man of affairs. He is not given to dreaming, is apt to scoff at ideals as visionary, and to make light of fine theories. But he sets great store on quiet, deliberate action. Steadfastness of reasoned purpose, the power of well-regulated habit, are the virtues he admires. Genius is to him the power of taking pains.

Now, while this is only half the truth, it is an important half. The rules of wise experience, the observed action of cause and effect in human life, the wisdom that is the result not of high speculation, but of keen observation of life, are of the highest practical value. This is the special province of the writers of the Hebrew "wisdom" literature.

II. The Sin of Indolence.

As we might expect, to the quietly industrious man of practical aims, the dreamer and the lazy man are both objects of ridicule. Have sober, wise, practical ideas, and carry them out with unremitting steady diligence.

It is interesting to note how often in the book the lot of the lazy is alluded to. He is sneered at again and again. He goes hungry in harvest because it was too cold for him to plough in the fall. His hand is right in the dish of life's plenty, but he is actually too lazy to lift it to his mouth. Where the decent, energetic man finds a plain, clear road, the way is too full of thorns for the sluggard. It is the sluggard who says there is a lion in the way. Filled? Yes, filled with desires. But the sluggard's desires never come to anything. Such are some of the sayings of the author of proverbs. To him the chief virtues are wisely considered aims and industry in putting them into practice. (See Prov. xv. 19, xix. 24, xiii. 4, xxii. 13, etc.)

III. Our Lesson.

Here we have the most extended picture of the vice of indolence. Nothing could well be more cutting than its tone of quiet contempt. The lazy, utterly senseless, idle fellow, who is

always waiting for something to turn up, stands out before us as sketched by the hand of a master. It is before the lazy fellow's eyes all the time,—that ruined vineyard and neglected farm. But it has no effect. When a man has any sense, it is worth considering. There is a lesson there. But all the sluggard thinks of is having an easy time, letting things drift. Perhaps it will all come right some day. There is no "perhaps" in the vocabulary of the *wise* man.

Notice the strong contrast in the last two lines. Poverty and want do not linger or sleep. They come surely and fast with no languorous foot. The wise man knows that inevitable law is the one certain thing in the universe. The lazy man is "void of understanding." (See vi. 10, 11.)

IV. How True this is of Practical Experience!

The men who make the most of life are the men of action. He who hesitates is lost. The men who win the battles of the world do not count heads. Nothing venture, nothing win. Cross the street when you have the chance. Half the obstacles in life are born of our own indolence. Such maxims lie along the line of the road to success. The lazy, slothful temper is the temper which courts failure.

"Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we oft might win
By fearing to attempt."

As Carlyle never wearies of telling us, the king is the man of practical ability, accustomed to act, never letting purpose be without resolute result.

Half the failures in the world are not from ignorance of roads to success but because the habit of treading steadily the road that opened had not been formed.

Illustrate this from daily life. It is not difficult to find examples in the schools, in business, on 'change. Vigor in carrying out one's intentions is everywhere essential.

V. One may apply This in a Deeper Sense.

The garden of the sluggard may remind us of the undiscovered country of the possibilities of character. Love merely of what is easy and pleasant, dreaming beautiful dreams of what one might be, is not enough. We need resolute purpose and the habit of acting on it continually, if we are to realize the power of latent faculty that is in us. "Do noble deeds, not dream them all day long."

What is most lacking is the temper which refuses excuses and acts. To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow lead to nothing. Now and here is the chance. Felix's "convenient season" never comes. (Acts xxiv. 25.) How often we put off till it is too late simply because we are spiritually lazy! Beware. Spiritual laziness leads to spiritual impotence.

In "Romola" we see the same lesson. Tito came to a disastrous and disgraceful end not because he was bad so much as because he was indolent. He loved the easy way, hated to brace himself for noble effort, and slipped on till he reached the lowest depths.

In "Silas Marner" there is a passage at the end of chapter ix. which is to the point. Adapting it a little, we may say, "The evil principle deprecated in the indolent man's religion is the orderly sequence by which the seed brings forth a fruit after its kind." See the whole passage.

VI. It is a Matter of Training.

Laziness is a habit. So is the active, hopeful, energetic attitude. Either is the result of cultivation. "Use almost can change the stamp of nature." A resolute bearing, the power of constant initiative, the attitude of command, the weight which comes of practical ability,—all of these are among the things which our lesson bids us cultivate. They will not come by our dreaming about them, but may surely result from the habit gradually and slowly formed of holding ourselves braced toward the goodly opportunities of life. What is ease when we compare it with steadfast capacity born of resolute, determined, constant activity?

Lesson XVIII.

WHAT IS THE NEW TESTAMENT?—PART I.

I. The Church of the Apostles.

It is impossible to do more than suggest one or two facts as to the primitive Church from the death of Jesus, about 30, to the destruction of Jerusalem, in 70 A.D. We have no contemporary documents; and Paul's letters, which date from that period, give us only slight indications.

1. Jesus was regarded as the Messiah, or Christ. In him the hope of Israel is to be fulfilled. His message is to Jews, and his kingdom the fulfilment of Jewish religion. Hence the Scriptures, as testifying to the Messiah, are of the highest interest, and play no small part in framing the thought of the early Church as to the life of Jesus.

2. His followers expected that he would return from heaven within a short time (at any rate, during the lifetime of those who were with him during his ministry) to found the Messianic kingdom. This fact is important, because such a belief made it wholly unnecessary to preserve by writing what men heard about Jesus from those who had been with him. This, as it was repeated in the little groups of believers, was modified, as time went on, more and more by the influence of the Old Testament sayings which were referred to the Messiah. This modified tradition is the source of what later came to be written down as the record of the life and teaching of Jesus.

II. The Work and Writings of Paul.

Alongside those who went out to preach the gospel to the Jewish communities on the shores of the Mediterranean we find one teacher of a broader temper and attitude. Paul, while looking on Jesus as the Messiah who was crucified (1 Cor. i. 23), and holding to the thought of his speedy coming (as we clearly see from 1 Thess. iv. 13-18), was the herald of deliverance from the law, and preached the good news to all, both Jews and foreigners.

Paul's letters are the earliest records we have. For some thirty years after his conversion (about 35 A.D.) he went about,

mainly in Asia Minor and Greece, gathering men together in the enthusiastic temper of brotherhood which the new faith created. From Corinth he wrote a letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thess.), then from Ephesus two letters to the church at Corinth, later from Corinth came the letters to the Galatians and Romans. Last of all, while in prison at Rome, he wrote to his loved friends at Philippi, and possibly also the little personal note we call the epistle to Philemon.

Paul disappears from view about 65. He is then in prison in Rome. Of his subsequent fate we *know* nothing.

III. The Destruction of Jerusalem.

In the year 70 Titus destroyed Jerusalem. The Christians of Palestine were scattered. Some of them went eastward to the Tigris-Euphrates valley, some to Asia Minor, some to Egypt. Wherever they went, they carried the good news, and widened the circle of Christian churches.

It seems possible that they may have carried with them two writings of which we hear later. Papias, one of the early Fathers, knew of a collection of the sayings of Jesus which Matthew had written down in the Palestinian vernacular, and that Mark, one of the companions of Peter, wrote down what he remembered of Peter's teaching as to Jesus. There seems also to have existed an itinerary of part of Paul's journeys, from which came the interesting passages written in the first person which are now preserved for us in the book of Acts (xvi. 10-17, xx. 5-15, xxi. 1-18, xxvii. 1-8, xxviii. 16).

The book of Revelation, possibly at first not a Christian, but a Jewish writing, belongs just before the fall of the city. It is a picture in vision form of the coming end of the age.

The anonymous letter to the Hebrews also was probably written about this time.

During the first forty years after the death of Jesus, while his followers were eagerly awaiting his coming, there was no impulse toward written records. The little group of writings already mentioned is all that belongs to the time of the companions of Jesus.

IV. The Gospels.

After the destruction of the city, as the number of those who had lived with Jesus grew rapidly less, the hope of his speedy coming weakened. A new generation is growing up. The widening circle of churches is further from direct apostolic

tradition. The need of written records comes to the front. In many quarters many hands collected what they could gather about the life and teaching of Jesus, and committed it to writing. The author of the Third Gospel tells us so (Luke i. 1). Of these writings, three have come down to us. They are our first three Gospels, and are based upon tradition as well as the earlier writings mentioned under III. Mark, the shortest and simplest, was written first, possibly not very long after the destruction of Jerusalem. Luke and Acts come considerably later, Matthew possibly later still. Last of all comes the Fourth Gospel. It is different from the others alike in its tone and in its arrangement. It is the story of Jesus as the Word of God revealed in human form. The others are narratives of what men could gather about the life and teaching of Jesus the Messiah. This is a philosophical presentation of that life as it appeared to one who was familiar with the thought which prevailed in Alexandria under Philo. It marks a new development of Christian teaching under the influence of Hebrew-Greek philosophy. It may have been written between 100 and 120.

If we regard the fall of Jerusalem as marking the close of the generation among whom Jesus lived, we may say that the four Gospels represent the later thought of his life and teaching, which grew up in the half-century from 70 to 120, Mark standing at the beginning of the period, and John at the very end.

V. Letters of this Time.

As was natural, this half-century which witnessed the beginning of that marvellous growth of Christianity which before very long spread from the Euphrates to the western limits of the Roman Empire gave rise to a host of other writings. Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, are among the letters to churches which have come down to us, possibly because they were known as Pauline letters. The pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus also belong to this time. Perhaps right at the end of it, alongside the Epistles of John, come the other "catholic" letters, so called because addressed to the Church in general, which bear the names of Peter, Jude, and James.

From this period, too, four writings which are no longer included in the New Testament, though they had a place there till the fourth and fifth centuries, have come to us in early manuscripts of the Bible. They are the two letters of Clement to the Corinthians, the letter of Barnabas, and a book telling of the

visions and teachings which the "Shepherd" gave to Hermas. These all come before 150, and the first letter mentioned was probably written by Clement to the church in Corinth about 96. They are all to be found in the New Testament Apocrypha.

VI. Lost and Later Writings.

This half-century and the hundred years which followed it were rich in literature to which we have only references. Gospels were current among the churches under the apostolic names of Andrew, Bartholomew, Peter, Philip, Thomas. As many as sixty writings which have disappeared are spoken of in the writings of the Fathers. Many of them, doubtless, were of little value. Some, like the Gospel of the Hebrews, attained wide circulation, and may well have deserved to rank beside the records of the life of Jesus which have come down to us.

VII. The New Testament.

None of the writings which we have in our New Testament were regarded as authoritative until long after they were written. The Old Testament alone is Scripture in the first two centuries. Little by little, as the Church grew in power, the writings which were most used began to gather authority. At the close of the second century we find a fairly settled collection in two portions,—the "Gospel," containing our present four, and the "Apostle," containing Acts and twelve Epistles attributed to Paul.

But the Shepherd of Hermas is quoted as Scripture, too; and there is no clearly defined limit. Even in the time of Constantine it is not clear what writings properly belong to the New Testament. Athanasius in 367 gives us our present list; and, although as late as the fourth and fifth centuries Clement, Barnabas, and Hermas were parts of the Bible, they gradually dropped out, while the writings of our New Testament remained.

Lesson XIX.

WHAT IS THE NEW TESTAMENT? PART II.

I. Summary of Results.

We have seen that in the fourth century the writings which form our New Testament came to occupy a position of authority and to be set alongside the Old Testament as Scripture. Although there was then and still later some divergence of opinion as to certain books, the after-judgment of the Church led to the adoption of the present New Testament books as "canonical."

They became such by gradual usage and survival from a literature much more extensive. Partly, no doubt, by the preference given to letters which were regarded as apostolic in their origin. Partly also to the accident of wide distribution. It was not the result of a deliberate or critical judgment, as the final omission of the first letter of Clement and the inclusion of some of the Catholic epistles shows.

It seems probable that none of the New Testament books come to us from the time of the contemporaries of Jesus, save the six undoubted Pauline letters. The Gospels, of which Mark is the earliest and John by far the latest, belong to the later period between 70 and 120, while they contain material from the tradition of apostolic times. Of the other books, Acts probably must be classed with the Third Gospel. The Apocalypse and Hebrews date from about 70. The letters to the Colossians and Ephesians come later, and the "general" or "catholic" epistles with the "pastoral" letters to Timothy and Titus belong to the end of the period, probably in part even later than the Fourth Gospel.

The whole, with the exception of the Pauline letters, is the survival of the literature of the early Church from the time of the destruction of Jerusalem to the middle of the second century. It exhibits the growth of men's thought as to Christian doctrine and the gathering of traditional and legendary, as well as philosophic, elements about the simpler facts of the life and teaching of Jesus.

II. The Early New Testament.

The order and arrangement of the New Testament books which we have in our Bible is not that of the early Greek Bible, but comes to us from Jerome and the Vulgate. The old order arranged the whole in five groups: 1. Gospel (according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John); 2. Acts of Apostles; 3. General letters (James, Peter I. and II., John I., II., and III., Jude); 4. Letters of Paul; 5. Revelation of John.

The letters ascribed to Paul are arranged as in our Bible, apparently according to length, with the exception that the letter to the Hebrews comes after 2 Thessalonians and before the little group of "pastoral" letters, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Its place is due to the wide-spread doubt, even in earliest times, as to its Pauline origin.

III. The Work of the Copyists.

From the time of Constantine the multiplication of copies of the Bible rapidly increased. We read that he had fifty fine manuscripts made for the churches in his new capital, Byzantium, or, as it is now called, Constantinople (Constantine's city). These consisted of the Septuagint, or Greek Old Testament, and of the Greek New Testament, probably as outlined above. There were also translations into Latin, Syriac, Egyptian, and Gothic. As the centuries went on, one of the chief duties of the monks was to make copies of the Bible. These were, as a whole, wonderfully accurate; but, as the manuscripts from which they were copied differed from one another, we have to-day a vast mass of divergencies, though slight on the whole, between the different manuscripts both of the Greek and the translated New Testament.

Some of the fragments are very beautiful. One from the sixth century, of which we have only a few leaves of the Gospels preserved in the British Museum, the Vatican, Vienna, and a Patmos monastery, was written in silver on purple vellum. Another, of the Gothic version of the Gospels, written in the sixth century, is also in silver on purple vellum, but with gold initials. The few leaves that remain are now in Upsala.

Unfortunately, the age of a manuscript was not looked upon as increasing its chance of accuracy; and most of the oldest copies which we now have have been discovered in quite modern times, sometimes as mere waste parchment in out-of-the-way monasteries, sometimes as the parchment on which, after it had

been washed, other matter has been written. These latter we call palimpsests. They impose the arduous labor of tracing under the later monkish writing the faint gospel narrative, it may be of some very early MS.

IV. The Authorized and Revised Versions.

The translation called Authorized was made in 1611 from the printed Greek text which came in 1633 to be regarded as the "received" or correct text. This was, however, founded on late manuscripts, and is full of all kinds of errors, some due to early differences in the originals. The translation is a masterpiece of English, which will on that account always hold its place. But, since it was made, a vast proportion of the very earliest manuscripts have been discovered, so that, if we wish to know as nearly as is possible to us what the authors really wrote, we have to go to some more modern translation.

The revised version of 1885 is an attempt to correct the imperfections of the authorized without altering its diction more than was absolutely necessary. It makes a great advance in accuracy, and brings the translation quite close enough to the early Greek text to answer all practical purposes.

The Greek Testament by Westcott and Hort is admittedly the most accurate reproduction of the original documents as yet possible. It is the basis of the translation into modern English now being issued as the Twentieth Century New Testament.

NOTE.—Some of the passages which did not form part of the original Gospels may be found by comparing the authorized and revised versions of Matt. xvi. 2, 3; xxvii. 49; Mark xvi. 9-20; Luke xxii. 19, 20, 43, 44; xxiii. 34; John v. 3, 4; vii. 53 to viii. 11. Most of these are interesting additions to the original manuscripts, some of them embodying very early and valuable tradition.

V. The Earliest Existing Greek Manuscripts.

There are four of these, two dating from the fourth and two from the fifth century. They all belong to what were originally complete Greek Bibles written on parchment in capital letters. The "Sinaaiticus" contains the New Testament entire, and is preserved in St. Petersburg. The "Vaticanus," in the Vatican Library in Rome, has all but the last five books in the early Greek order spoken of above. These two copies date from the fourth century. The first-mentioned contains as part of the New Testament the letter of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas.

The "Alexandrinus" in the British Museum contains the

whole Bible except a few leaves, and also, as part of the New Testament, the letters of Clement to the Corinthians, although the second is incomplete. The "Ephraem" manuscript, in the Imperial Library in Paris, is specially interesting, as it is a palimpsest. The original writing has been washed off and written over. It is very imperfect. Both it and the Alexandrinus belong to the fifth century.

It may be interesting to refer to reproductions of some illustrative portions of these early manuscripts. They are to be found in most books on textual criticism.

VI. The Inspiration of the New Testament.

The old notion that the Bible is every word of it inspired of God, and therefore accurate, dies as soon as we begin to study the circumstances of its origin. The only inspiration is that which belongs to it as recording for us what is part of the highest life and thought of humanity. In this sense, all noblest literature is truly inspired; and much of the New Testament is rich in such inspiration.

Its letters enable us to catch the spirit of the men whose message of good news became the power of a new life and a new ideal as the Roman Empire slowly rotted to its doom. They carry the inspiration of the religion of humanity and the spirit just as truly to-day as in the centuries of their birth.

The Gospels, under all their imperfect thought of the life and teaching of the Messiah, enable us still to come into touch with the simple figure of Jesus, the great herald of the religion of brotherhood and kindness, whose message best voices for us the noblest human ideals.

Lesson XX.

THE LIVING SPEECH OF GOD.

IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness overcame it not. There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. For of his fulness we all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

THE LIVING SPEECH OF GOD.

I. The Early Idea of God.

As we have seen the thought of Jahweh, simple and crude at first, gradually grew with man's wider thought of the universe, till in the greatest of the prophets he is thought of as the creator of the heaven and the earth.

In the New Testament we find Paul in his letter to the Romans speaking of God as revealing himself among the nations. "The invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made." In the words attributed to Paul on Mars' Hill he is reported as saying, "What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you ; for in him we live and move and have our being." (Rom. i. 20 ; Acts xvii. 23, 28.)

In another passage in Acts (x. 35) we read, "In every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable unto him." Thus, some time before the Fourth Gospel from which our lesson is taken, men had come as followers of Jesus to the idea of God as the Creator, who is seen in all his universe and nowhere left himself without a witness. The national religion of the Jews has developed into a universal religion, and the national God come to be more truly seen as the God of the universe and of all men.

How different this is from the early picture thought of Jahweh as one among the many Gods of the nations to be appeased or propitiated by sacrifice and having his dwelling in one specified locality !

II. The Influence of Greek Thought.

When Christianity began to spread through the ancient world, it could not help coming into contact with other ideas, some of which were of great influence in moulding alike its form and its thought. As it came to appeal to wider and wider circles, it had to express itself as a reasonable faith and to explain its relation to men's thought of the universe.

Already more than four hundred years before the birth of Jesus, Socrates and Plato had taught in Athens ; and their teach-

ing spread and developed far and wide. One of the offshoots of this later Greek philosophy had its centre in Alexandria, where there grew up a Greek-Jewish school of thought. Philo was its greatest teacher. He lived and taught at the time when Paul was carrying the good news through the cities of Asia Minor and Greece.

This Alexandrian interpretation of the universe was on the one side an outgrowth of the "Wisdom" literature of the Jews, of which we find the beginning in the book of Proverbs, where Wisdom is almost personalized, and is looked on as the source of the created universe. The idea developed into a Jewish philosophy among the Alexandrian Jews, from whom we have the Greek version of the Old Testament and the wonderful Greek apocryphal books of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. (Consult "Great Thoughts of Israel.")

On the other hand, this Alexandrian philosophy was moulded by Greek culture. It grew up outside the narrower circle of Palestinian Judaism, and tried to weave into one the thoughts which we have seen growing up in the Old Testament and the results of the great Athenian thinkers.

The central idea of this Alexandrian philosophy is that of the "logos," the speech, or word, of God. It is the Greek word which means also reason or wisdom. To Philo it is personified, and becomes, as it were, a sort of emanation from God which expresses itself in the visible universe. It corresponds in some measure to Plato's thought of the Divine Idea, of which all things on earth are only imitations.

III. The Central Thought of the Fourth Gospel.

The passage which forms our lesson shows us how this thought is taken up into Christianity. Jesus is not here looked on as the Jewish Messiah, as in the other Gospels and in Paul, but is presented as the embodiment of the eternal word of God which speaks to us in all the universe.

The world, life, knowledge, men, are all of them expressions of the speech of God. Jesus is the "Word" in human form. God is one whom men cannot see. Jesus is God made visible. In his "grace and truth" we see God.

All this is very different from the teaching of Jesus himself. His message, as we have it in the parables and the beatitudes and the good news of the kingdom of God who is "our Father," did not try to become a reasoned system or to ask the

questions which it had to face later on. Here we find the way in which his followers long after his death tried to make him intelligible in his relation to the thought of the world.

IV. **The Modern Thought of God.**

In spite of all that the older theologies have done, men to-day are coming to think of God in a way which this little introduction to the Fourth Gospel half suggests.

To us God is no longer a being outside the universe, who created it long ago out of nothing and "watches it go." Rather is he the one power of which all the infinitely varied energy of the universe is the expression. The more we know of the forces about us, the more we are compelled to believe that they are all of them only one. Heat turns into electricity, electricity into the force which moves our machinery. Both come from the power which stored the coal or lifted from the ocean the water of the great lakes that *create*, as we wrongly say, the infinite forms of energy into which the current from the dynamos at the falls may be transformed. Back of it all we have to think of one infinite and eternal energy, of which everything that we know is an expression.

Then, as we watch the unfolding of the universe, we see how it unfolds in forms that grow finer and more complex. The myriad life of plants and of animals issues in the life of the savage, and that in turn is growing to express itself in the limitless unfolding possibilities of human nature. It is all the unfolding of God. The higher man rises, the better he expresses God. Jesus does speak to us of God, because we can see in him something of the wonder of human life as it grows to its highest. It tells us of the life of which our life is the outcome. As the children grow, they understand better the Father of all. As the universe blossoms into love, character, manhood, spirit, we are coming to understand better what God is of whom they all are only an imperfect expression.

Shelley says :

"The one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull, dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear ;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the heaven's light."

Lesson XXI.

THE PRIVILEGE OF LOVING SERVICE.

JESUS, during supper, knowing that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel, and girded himself, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me, Master, and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you. If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

FOURTH GOSPEL, chapter thirteen.

THE PRIVILEGE OF LOVING SERVICE

I. Is this Narrative Historical?

As we have seen in the "Scenes in the Life of Jesus," lesson xxxii., the account of the Last Supper in the Fourth Gospel differs in many points from the story of the Synoptics. The incident in our lesson finds no place there. As a matter of fact, all that is quite clear is that by the time our four Gospels were written there was no certainty even as to the date of the Last Supper itself, and that all that the tradition recorded of it had been modified in some measure by the thought of the Messiah which arose after the death of Jesus.

It is hard for us to understand, if the incident in the lesson really took place, how it could possibly have been left unrecorded in the three earliest narratives which have come down to us.

On the other hand, it is equally hard to imagine why it should have been invented even as an allegory.

Such being the case, it is not surprising to find that authorities of the highest standing are divided on the point. All that we can say is that, even if the incident did not take place, it represents to us in beautiful form what was without doubt the temper of the Master. As such, it has taken its place in the teaching of the Church about Jesus. Its real value is not bound up with the question, to which no certain answer can be given, whether the washing of the disciples' feet really happened or is only a picture born of the thought of him who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

II. The Secret of Jesus.

When we try to get at the very heart of the changed attitude, which was central to all that Jesus taught as the good news of the kingdom, we find that it lay in helping men to get away from the narrow, self-centred thought of life to the wider interests of others. Do not dwell on what you can get. Delight in finding out how much you can give. So there opens to you your own true life and the larger and deeper satisfaction, which is, indeed, good news. If your happiness depends on your obtaining what you crave for yourself only, it is a poor sort of happiness at best. Just because it makes life so much richer

and finer, he bids us lose such paltry interests in the glory of contributing somewhat to the life and blessedness of others.

We find this in his teaching continually. In the parable of the good Samaritan what is blamed is the temper which asks, "What am I obliged to do?" What is praised is the temper which eagerly grasps any opportunity which offers of showing neighborliness. The priest and the Levite have been held up to everlasting ignominy, just because they failed to do what they, rightly enough from their own standpoint, regarded as none of their business. To Jesus, kindness is not an obligation, but a privilege which the man who knows the real quality of fine life eagerly seizes upon.

In "Ecce Homo" this is well described as the enthusiasm of humanity. It was the office of Jesus to bring men to feel that love of their fellows, and the power to uplift and strengthen others because of it, was the very best thing possible to men.

In comparison with this nothing is worth much. It is the highest law of our nature at the highest. The life of Jesus only becomes intelligible when we see that this is its supreme motive. His message to us is that we, too, if we are wise, must find out for ourselves that nothing else can bring the highest kind of satisfaction.

III. Other Versions of this Truth.

When we come to ask other great teachers what they have to tell us of the best way to make a great deal of life, we find that their answers in varying forms come to the same thing.

To Buddha the great secret is to become free from the slavery of our own selfish desires. That is the "great deliverance" he himself found. It is a negative statement of the truth of our lesson. He said, "Cease to love self." Jesus said, "Learn to love others."

In modern times, teachers of very different schools set the same result before us. Comte inculcates it in his "Worship of Humanity." John Stuart Mill tells us that happiness is only to be found in seeking "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." The great German idealists bid us rise out of the narrow individual life into that which is universal. George Eliot says, "We can only have the highest happiness by having much feeling for the rest of the world." The altruism we hear so much of nowadays is only finding our own good in the good of others.

IV. The Scientific Side of this Truth.

The modern thought of the development of humanity tells us the same thing. The savage is at first almost purely selfish. His life rises in value only as love of others, wife and child and kinsfolk first, comes to expel in some measure the purely selfish desires. Man's life gains in quality as in addition to this he learns to make the interest, first of the clan, and then of the nation, part of his own highest good. Beyond us on the path of the enrichment of life lies that which was the dream of Jesus, when men shall all be brothers in the great family of God.

Ultimately, the good of each is the same as and is bound up with the good of all. You cannot injure your neighbor without injuring yourself is a truth which is almost obvious to any one who looks, in the light of modern knowledge, even a little way below the surface of things. Man begins by trying to establish his own welfare in opposition to the welfare of others. As he grows wise, he inevitably comes to discover that the welfare of others is the essential condition of his own.

V. The Concrete Lesson.

Tennyson tells us that

"Truth in closest words shall fail,
When truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lowly doors."

So the picture of Jesus as his followers loved to think of him, taking on him the office of a servant and washing the feet of the disciples, sends home to us what to him was the delight of life. Only in love of others can life become full of quiet, noble joy like his. Carlyle says: "To make some nook of God's creation a little fruitfuller, better, more worthy of God; to make some human hearts a little wiser, manfuller, happier,—more blessed, less accursed!—it is work for a God." The lesson tells us that in simpler fashion.

Lesson XXII.

I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE.

LET not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go, ye know the way.

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father.

If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. And I will pray my Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth. He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful.

I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE.

I. The Teaching of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel.

As we have already seen, the Fourth Gospel is a presentation of the life and teaching of Jesus which arose under the influence of a circle of ideas which were foreign to the atmosphere in which he lived. It gives to us the conception of his person and his message which arose in the minds of his followers long after his death. In the earliest Gospels, which seem to preserve for us the historical tradition of his teaching both in its form and matter, we have something very different from the long, half philosophic addresses which make up the greater portion of the fourth.

When we ask whether these beautiful farewell discourses from which our lesson is taken, reproduce for us what Jesus really said at the Last Supper with his disciples, we are forced to admit that, even though they may give us some memory of his farewell message, it has been transformed by the thought of the writer.

While it is true that the Dialogues of Plato represent Socrates as speaking, and are the result of his teaching, we cannot rely upon them if we are to gain a clear idea of what Socrates really thought and said. They tell us how what he taught developed in the mind of one of his disciples.

This is true of the Fourth Gospel. It gives us a picture of the teaching of Jesus as one of his followers — gathering, doubtless, his materials from what he had heard about the Master — conceived his thought to have been.

II. The Teaching of Jesus as to the Hereafter.

It is impossible to say what Jesus either thought or said on the question. For one thing, his teaching occupied itself mainly with the upbuilding of the kingdom of God in the hearts of men. His main thought is always of the religion the first word of which is kindness and the second service. Back of all is the central idea of the love of God, "our Father." When we remember, too, that the religion of his nation had little place for

the belief in immortality, it seems not improbable that the question of the hereafter rarely entered the mind of Jesus, and that, when it did, it was left with no other answer but that of absolute trust in the eternal goodness of God. Certainly, we find in his teaching, even in the Fourth Gospel, nothing which at all corresponds to the thought of the future life which has dominated the creeds of the Church of later times.

III. The Jewish Thought.

Curiously enough, the entire absence of the belief in immortality from the whole of the Old Testament has not attracted half the notice one would have expected from those who attach most authority to its teaching. In its highest moments it concerns itself with the ideal future of Israel. But that future is the establishment of a Davidic monarchy in the old city, often, it is true, under almost supernatural conditions, but never in the world of the spirit which men picture as the heavenly life beyond.

In Ecclesiastes, as we have seen in the lesson on that book ("Great Thoughts of Israel," lesson x.), life after death is definitely denied. The religion of Israel is the religion of righteousness on earth. Immortality plays no part in its thought or teaching.

IV. Plato and the Hereafter.

The classic passages for the idea of the continued life of the individual after death are Greek. There is nothing finer in the whole literature of the subject than its presentation in the *Phædo* and at the end of the *Apology*. A great deal of the later Christian thought may be traced back to this source. While the body perishes, the soul is immortal. When Crito asks Socrates how he would have them bury him, he laughingly answers, "You must catch me first." Refer, if possible, to Church's "*Trial and Death of Socrates*," which contains a translation of the *Phædo*, *Crito*, and *Apology*.

V. What Paul Taught.

In the first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul in reply to their question tells his converts what he himself believed as to the future. Very shortly Jesus is to reappear in the clouds. The dead are to be raised, and the living carried up to meet him in the air. (1 Thess. iv. 13-18.) This was the universal expectation of the generation immediately after the death of Jesus. The Messianic kingdom was at hand.

VI. The Teaching of the Church.

With the development of the authoritative Church the hereafter began to play an all-important part. It gave the power of immortal blessedness or eternal torment into the hands of the priest. Owing to it, kings cringed at feet of the popes; and it became possible for the Church to burn at the stake those who questioned her authority. Better to burn here than to burn forever hereafter. The Inquisition was possible only because of men's belief in the eternal hereafter.

George Eliot spoke of Protestantism with good reason as "other worldliness" not less selfish than worldliness. Watts could write in one of his hymns,—

"What bliss will fill the ransomed souls,
When they in glory dwell,
To see the sinner as he rolls
In quenchless flames of hell!"

In Mr. Spurgeon's sermon (Second Series, No. 17) we read of a literal hell corresponding to a literal heaven. "There is a real fire in hell, not a metaphorical fire, but actual flame." This life, to many of the religious teachers of his time, is as nothing in comparison with the definite, actual life beyond.

Within the last ten years the missionary board in Boston had to face the question whether a man who thought that there might be some hope that the heathen were not consigned to eternal perdition was fit to go out as a missionary.

VII. The Modern Thought.

Let us be thankful that men are getting beyond a mechanical thought of a crude material hereafter, like this. We are coming to consider the question from a universal standpoint, like that of Plato. What lies after death is a matter on which we can know nothing. But, with the growing thought of God as the infinite love of which all human love is an imperfect expression, the thought of death has lost its terror. We are but travelling to that which infinite love has ordered, and we can meet it with absolute trust like that which breathes in our lesson.

Lesson XXIII.

YE ARE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER.

I SAY, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly. For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another.

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another; in diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.

Bless them that persecute you; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Set not your mind on high things, but be carried away with things that are lowly. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

ROMANS, chapter twelve.

YE ARE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER.

I. Difficulty of Understanding Paul's Letters.

To the majority of readers Paul's letters, especially in the authorized translation, are of comparatively little interest. They belong to another world than ours.

This is in part due to the fact that considerable portions of them refer to conditions and appeal to arguments which are altogether outside the horizon of our time. But it is still more due to the fact that the translation is full of phrases which have become the current coin of a theology which had not been born when Paul wrote. No one would be more astonished than Paul himself at the theological doctrines which are supposed to have been derived from his writings.

The first thing we have to do, if we wish to understand his letters, is to remember that they are neither "Scripture" nor systematic theological treatises, but the rapidly dictated impulsive speech of a man all tingling with the inspiration of a burning enthusiasm. They are full of every mark of hurried, eager, familiar speech. They are colloquial in style. Sentences are left unfinished. Passionate eagerness thrills through them again and again. Nothing matters but that his readers may catch the enthusiasm of the new life of brotherhood.

One of the best helps available is to read these letters in a version which is wholly different from that to the sound of which we have become accustomed. Perhaps the best yet accessible to us is the translation now published as the second part of the "Twentieth Century New Testament."

If we read them in some such version, keeping in mind what has just been said and skipping the argumentative portions turning on the interpretation of the Old Testament, we may find, as we come into touch with the man himself, something of the enthusiasm of his own noble, eager spirit.

II. Paul and Jesus.

It has been often said that Christianity as the Church has known it is not the religion of Jesus, but the creature of Paul's theological imagination. If, however, we get at the real Paul, we shall find that this is only worse than untrue. It is half-true.

Underneath his semi-theological interpretation of the Messiah who was crucified we find the constant current of the ideal of life which was that for which Jesus himself supremely stood. True though it is that Paul tells us nothing about the life or directly about the teaching of his Master, it is also true that he continually breathes his spirit. He speaks of the turning-point of his own life as his coming to understand what Jesus really was. Growing up into that life or having that life grow up in him is his constant ideal. Nowhere in the New Testament have we any picture of what in its essence Jesus stood for, which we can place beside the picture of the spirit of his master in Paul's letter to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. xiii.).

III. The Kingdom of God.

This which was the main theme of the gospel in the mouth of Jesus is, in word at any rate, not so constantly before us in Paul's writings. But the reality, the rule of their own highest nature as God's children in the lives of men, is the main burden of all that he writes. Moreover, by him it is applied to all the detailed practical questions of the daily life of those to whom he wrote. It is no far-off dream. He sets about establishing it in all the cities of the eastern Mediterranean. It began to realize itself amid the rottenness of a decaying Paganism in the slums of Corinth and Ephesus and Thessalonica.

It is the life of brother-like kindness, of comradeship. Ye are members one of another. "Brothers" is his favorite term of address. A splendid manhood fashioned after the manliness of Jesus is his ideal. He is supremely the practical man of affairs. The "faith" on which he so incessantly insists is most of all the confident assurance that this finer life is a possible thing, realizable here and now. If Jesus declared and lived the kingdom of God, Paul made it a practical reality in the lives of men.

IV. The Ideal of Manhood.

This is what our lesson and countless passages like it all through Paul's letters continually presents. As we come to believe the message that we are children of God, there awakens into life the better nature which is latent in every man. It vibrates with a new spiritual dignity. Its law is the inner power of a new enthusiasm, not the craven's obedience to an outside authority. We are sons of God and fellow-heirs with Christ. In no religion in the world has the inspiration of the ideal life

been set forth with such splendid reality. Believe in it. Find out its meaning by actual trial. Unite yourself with your fellows in the endeavor to realize its meaning. Fight clear of all religion of mere form and ritual. Live from within. Stand as free men whom Jesus has delivered from the tyranny of external authority and made servants of their own highest good. Such are the counsels which echo through all that he writes.

V. Keynotes.

Be yourself, not a dreamer led astray by some phantom of imagination in the quest of an impossible good. Think of yourselves soberly. Make religion a matter of the sane wise following of a practical ideal. What that ideal is he himself describes as the realization of our manhood as we see it in the fuller manhood of Jesus. Pass from the childhood of ignorance into the full manhood which we see clearly in him. His spirit is your spirit. To be yourself is to learn to let that be the ruling power of your life.

Love men. That is the second step. Your own true life brings you at once into truer relations to your fellows. The ideal is a social ideal. The kingdom of heaven means the creation of a community where each is strong in the sense of common ideals and common needs. The first thing is to be delivered from the paltry life seeking its own narrow good. The second, resulting at once from it, is to find delight in establishing closer relations with others in whom that same life is springing up.

Then you will find that you come into a different relation even to those who oppose you. They, too, though they know it not, are kinsmen. The man in whom the ideal life is awakening cannot hate, but only pity, those who know less of life's finer spirit than he does. Love one another. Love your enemies. Learn what both mean by growing into the manhood you see in Jesus.

Lesson XXIV.

THE TEST OF EXPERIENCE.

ACCORDING to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise master-builder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss.

Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

I. CORINTHIANS, chapter three.

THE TEST OF EXPERIENCE.

I. Life as a Building.

The figure is not an uncommon one. We find it later in the Gospels. In Luke xiv. 28, life is compared to the building of a tower. Jesus in the "Sermon on the Mount" speaks of building the house on the rock or on the loose soil. Paul continually refers to the common life of the followers of Jesus as having for its object the building up (edifying) of the ideal society. Here he uses the same figure in another way.

The foundation of the Christian life is acceptance of the good news. In whatever form of teaching it comes or from whomsoever as teacher, the beginning is the sense that the best life is life as Jesus lived it. But that is only a beginning. As Jesus himself taught, the divine message is like seed. But the result at harvest time depends on the manner in which we afford it good soil. So here many may feel the beauty of the ideal, and yet keep on building life of poor material. Within them there is indeed the good foundation of a desire to make something fine and strong of the opportunities life brings. But, as a matter of fact, the desire is allowed to remain a desire only; and the growth of life has no real relation to it. They build of wood, hay, stubble.

Others, on the noblest foundation of the clear vision in Jesus of what life may really be, build on it something worthy. The gold, silver, costly stones, of strong, noble character. In these the actual, daily routine of life is worthy of its ideals; and the ideal is duly realized in habit and action. So rises the noble structure of a noble life.

We find this same idea in the Epistle of James. Faith which is not made the constant power of all our commonest relations is empty and useless. To believe that the life we see in Jesus is our best life, and then to act only in obedience to our own selfishness, is useless. Only the faith which makes itself visible as the controlling power of life is real. James i. 23-27; ii. 14-26.

II. The Test of the Building.

Paul, with the early Christian communities as a whole,

believed that during the lifetime of the companions of Jesus the end of the age was to come. When in the passage before us he says, "The day shall declare it," he thinks of the day when, through the open heavens, the glorified Messiah shall return to set up his kingdom on earth. (See I. Thess. iv. 15-18.) At that sudden return of the Lord it will be clearly seen who are in truth his real followers. Everything which does not belong to his kingdom will perish.

It is as though a great conflagration were to come. Though the foundations are good, those houses which are only of wood, hay, stubble, must inevitably be consumed. Gold, silver, precious stones, will endure the test. Only that in our life which is worthy of the teaching of the Master will avail us in the new life of the kingdom. All else will perish, and we shall have bestowed our labor in vain.

III. The Test of Experience.

We have, of course, long since outgrown the primitive thought of the speedy return of Jesus in the clouds to set up an external kingdom on earth. As men have grown, they have come to the truer thought which has its root in the great Teacher himself, of the kingdom as the slow growth of a nobler life in the hearts of men.

But, while we have outgrown the form of Paul's thought, we have not outgrown the reality which he means it to teach. Whether our relation to the message of the best life as Jesus sets it forth is to be something of permanent value or not still depends on the quality of the material which we are building up in our daily living. The ideal may remain a far-off ideal, a dream, while we day by day, are adding, little by little, things which are of no real value. Selfish habits. Common interests and tastes. Impulse instead of fine, clear, purpose. Mere external conformity to the life about us instead of resolute loyalty to what we see to be true. That now as then corresponds to the building of wood, hay, stubble, instead of gold, silver, precious stones.

Experience will put it to the test. As we meet the pressure of life, as those conditions come to us which demand quiet strength to endure, as adverse circumstance throws us back on ourselves, we discover the difference between an ideal which has not had place in our lives and one which has built up within us the quiet power and the lasting satisfaction which

are the heritage of those only whose delight in life is not dependent on ever-changing surroundings, but on the growth of personal quality. If we allow life to grow deep, the storm when it comes will ruffle only its surface. The shallow life, stirred throughout, perishes sometimes before the rush of the storm.

IV. The Wise Ordering of Life.

This is along the line of everything which wide experience has taught men. If our happiness is dependent on things outside of us, these may change at any time and our happiness be gone. But if the satisfaction of life is in the growing quality of what we ourselves are, calamity may serve that end as well as those things which are pleasant and easy. The harder experiences which are fatal to a life which has never really grown are all of them turned to gain by one who has used all that fortune brings to make him master of himself.

If the things of which we seek to build up life are those on which Jesus laid the supreme emphasis,—kindness, charity, trust, the sense of having been true to our own highest,—then what happens to us grows constantly of less importance. But if, on the other hand, our main thought is merely to have a pleasant time and to gratify our likings, then the test of the years is likely to bring calamity against which we have then no refuge. Still more likely is it that, as the years pass, we get tired of that kind of enjoyment. It comes at length to have lost its freshness. The test of time finds us without resource.

The wise man looks ahead. He asks how others of wider experience have found things. He looks at life as a whole. He sets himself to realize inward faculty; to become, not to possess. The ideal which grows within him is something which he makes the controlling power of his daily living. Then character becomes something in which there is power to endure. He himself builds a noble and strong manhood. Nothing else is of the highest value.

Lesson XXV.

THE SPIRIT OF JESUS.

IF I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see in a mirror darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I have been known. But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

THE SPIRIT OF JESUS.

I. The Form and the Reality.

The good folk in the little Corinthian church seem to have been anxious about the details of their religious life. This letter is full of reference to them. Ought Christians to sue one another in the courts? Is it better to marry or to remain single? How ought the Lord's Supper to be conducted? How are we to use the gift of tongues, or of prophesying, or of the interpretation of tongues? What place are women to take in public worship?

Much of this letter is taken up with answers to questions like these. They laid great importance on these "spiritual gifts," of which the gift of tongues, a kind of almost frenzied speech under the greatest excitement, is one of the most curious.

Here in this chapter, Paul, almost as if wearied of these details, rises to that which is to him the one thing of supreme importance.

It is as if he said: The form of worship, creeds, services, even the communion service itself, are all of them of no value at all in comparison with the vital and essential in religion. Unless you are learning the secret of the kindly spirit of brotherhood, they all of them avail nothing.

II. What is Religion?

All these things are only changing forms or means toward religion. They are not religion itself. Religion is kindness. The kindly spirit of love to others is that in which we are children of God. All else matters little.

Read his description of it. Try to put it into your own words. It is the direct opposite of the envious, self-centred spirit, which is always seeking to get something from others, always insisting on what is due to it, finding delight in discovering the faults of others, taking offence when it is not treated with proper respect. That, he says, is the spirit which destroys religion. The delight of the good news is in cultivating the opposite temper. To delight in thinking kindly thoughts and in truth everywhere. To be filled with a sense of kinship with all men, just because, after all, you and they are very like one

another at heart. To be full of quiet trust, and inspired by constant, cheerful hopefulness. That is religion.

What a glorious conception this is! That religion is something outside of all the forms of religion. That it rests on no special revelation, and is the property of no one church nor of all the churches. That it is simply the growth of the most beautiful spirit in men everywhere.

But it must be simply natural. You must be full of this spirit, because you are learning that that in itself makes life of the highest value. It is not something to be done as a duty. It is not giving to the poor because that is the right thing to do or making disagreeable sacrifices because you ought to do so. It is just coming to learn that to let the kindest in you have control is the most delightful thing in the world. To be always the brightest and most helpful and kindly you can toward everyone simply because it makes you happy so to be. That is religion.

What is wrong with the selfish, mean spirit, which always thinks first of what it can get for itself, is merely that there is so little real satisfaction in it. We find it so ourselves. It makes a man bitter and hard. It separates him from his fellows. Men's faces do not grow brighter in his presence. The only way to get at the sunshine that there is in all the world is to bring sunshine to it. It is as though Paul, speaking out of his own experience, were telling us that he had found nothing else really worth while. Religions change, men's belief alters. The forms and institutions of religion are different everywhere. But the spirit of the kindly human life endures and grows, and must win in the end just because men cannot help finding, as they try it, how good it is. Religion in all times and in all lands, in and outside of all churches, is the discovery of the delight of the kindly life.

III. How is it to Come?

It is just as natural as the growth of a child. At first men are like children. Their thoughts are imperfect and wrong. They mistake shams for reality. They are deluded by the mere appearance of things. But, as they pass into manhood, they learn what life really is. It is the slow, inevitable process of growth. As you come to understand the best things, you will come to know what religion really means. Never mind that there have been ten thousand other and imperfect ideas about

it. Get to know for yourself that it is at heart only growing into the fulness of your real nature and the delight of living as a man ought to live. There is nothing else can bring half the satisfaction that there is in being simply your best, kindest, hopefulest self everywhere and to all men. You can, if you will, carry everywhere the gladness of a sunny spirit. You have the power, if you care to use it, to make life happier, braver, more hopeful wherever you go. To get to know the delight of it is religion.

You will find that sort of religion everywhere. Sometimes among folk who never go to church. Sometimes among those whose form of religion is very different from yours. It is universal in the sense that it is that toward which all men are tending as they learn how to make the best of life. For you the best thing of all is to have a share in helping its growth in the world.

IV. Paul's Picture of Jesus.

We sometimes hear it said that Paul, the great preacher of religion, tells us nothing about Jesus. If we depended on him alone, we should know nothing of the great facts of the Master's life. But does it not seem as though in this lesson of ours he had told us all that we need know as to what made Jesus what he was? When we ask what Jesus really did on earth, we have to answer that, after all, it amounted to nothing but letting men feel the power of a life lived in this glad human spirit of kindness. He did not found a church or set up a standard of belief or publish some special doctrine. He simply lived a wonderfully beautiful human life, so that a few men came to love it and to find it growing up in them. It sometimes seems as though Jesus said hardly anything about religion as people often think of it. But he never ceased to live, and to help men to feel the beauty of living, in the delight of making this world more full of the joy of kindness. That in its essence was religion to Jesus. Our lesson is Paul's picture of it.

Lesson XXVI.

GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST.

GOD hath made us ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST.

I. Religion from Without.

Religion has only too often been looked upon as a set of commandments imposed upon men by God under penalty for disobedience. You must do what is right because it is God's command; and, if you do not, He will punish you eternally. The "covenant" of the Jewish law was to Paul a religion of this order. He calls it a religion of the letter.

To him it is *a slave's religion*. To do good only because you are afraid to follow what you yourself wish for is hateful. The desire for freedom is great. To be forbidden simply because some authority outside has the power to punish if we do not obey incites to rebellion only. Elsewhere he says it makes men sin.

Then, as he says, *it killeth*. In place of our real life, ordered by our own judgment and will, which is the only possible source of real goodness, it sets a life which is not really ours, but only one which we adopt through conformity or fear. It cannot produce real goodness. A man may keep all the commandments, and yet at heart be a bad man, kept only from doing bad actions by cowardice. Such a religion to Paul makes real goodness impossible, because that must be the spontaneous expression of the life within.

Elsewhere he says it is true that the religion of external authority is necessary at first like the authority of a school-master over children who do not know any better. But here, speaking as to grown men, his criticism is that the religion of external authority is slavery, and cannot produce real goodness.

II. Religion from Within.

In strong contrast to this old religion of external authority he places the good news of the religion of the spirit. God is the indwelling spirit in His children. Religion is to obey our real nature. To do what is right because we want to do it, because only in doing it can we be our true selves.

This is *liberty*. You may do what you like. Only, if you are true to yourself, you will love to do only what is good and right. It is no longer a slave's religion, compelling you to obey

what is alien to you, but willing conformity to what you know to be the best in yourself. The service of one's own highest is freedom.

So also, as contrasted with the death to one's own life which the religion of the law produced, the religion of the spirit is *life*. It is the divine life which is ours getting to its full delight and power. The whole call of the gospel which Paul lived and preached is a call to life. What is wrong with selfishness and sin is that it is not life as man's life really is. His message is one of deliverance from our ignorant and unworthy existence to the glorious liberty of living as befits the children of God who are joint heirs with Christ.

As our real nature awakens within us, we grow free in obedience. Be yourselves,—your real true selves, as full-grown men in God's world. That alone is life. Yield to it. Learn its beauty and strength. Cease to be slaves to your own short-sighted ignorance. Rise to the sense of deliverance and power which belong to your true nature as it grows toward completeness.

III. This is the Religion which is in Jesus.

Jesus shows us our true life. In him human life rises toward perfection. God is our Father. His life is our life. In Jesus we see what it means to live as those in whom the nature of the eternal goodness is able to find expression. We come to understand what a divine glory belongs to life when we see it shining for us in the face of Jesus Christ.

Paul elsewhere tells us that the beginning of the new spirit of life and freedom was when, on the Damascus journey, "it was God's good pleasure to reveal his Son in me," (Gal. i. 16). He means that for the first time he came to understand that Jesus, whom he was persecuting, was only one who was living the very highest and noblest life. It made the possibilities of his own nature clear to Paul. His real life is just as though Jesus were living in him. When we understand ourselves, we understand him. Coming to understand and love him is coming to understand what we, too, really are.

IV. Paul's Gospel.

Life or religion to Paul is simply the process of realizing in his own experience, as the development of his own true nature, that which he first clearly saw in Jesus. As he pondered on what he everywhere heard about him, it at last became clear to

him; and life ever afterward was a progress toward becoming what Jesus had shown him he really was.

It was indeed good news to Paul. It meant liberty. He was to follow the things which he is learning to love above all else. His religion is to be a service of that which brought the noblest satisfaction. To live, to be a man after the fashion of the Master, is the one delight of all delights for which he was willing to forsake all that the old life had to offer him. All through his letters to his "brothers," as he calls them, there runs in spite of all adverse circumstances (and things went pretty hard with him) a note almost of exultation. He is here in this world not as a slave to a tyrant, but as one in whom the limitless divine which is in and through all things may voice itself.

God is no alien, far-off deity, but the very life of our life and the Father of our spirits. In him we live and move and have our being. It is indeed good news that God is the power of our Father in us, able and ready to deliver us from ignorance and our first narrow selfishness into liberty and kinship and mastery.

V. Its Practical Power.

In Paul we see what a wonderful inspiration this sense of growing vitality continually was. When he started out to live this life obedient to new ideals, he lost all that friends and position could bring him. He became, as was to be expected, the enemy whom orthodoxy pursued with relentless hatred. He faced adverse circumstances from the first, and died amid bitter persecution. Yet where in all the history of mankind can we find anything so full of intensest delight and vitality as these letters of his. Behind all the dark present he sees the things which are hidden to the outer eye. The day is about to dawn. The larger life he already feels in himself is opening to men. What matters it if all that one sees in the institutions of Rome and the iron forms of authority are against it? What we see is ever passing away. What is unseen save to hope and faith shall surely come. He could look to wider horizons, and be strong in the joy of his own fuller and keener life. It is God's glory. And it is shining in his heart.

Lesson XXVII.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

THE fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control: against such there is no law. And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.

And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

GALATIANS, chapters five and six.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

I. The Lower Life.

Although Paul's phrases, "to be carnally-minded" or "the works of the flesh," are phrases which we do not now use, the underlying fact of experience is clear. On the one hand there is the immediate life of impulse and desire from which we are moving. On the other there is the truly human life to which these are subordinate.

In its beginning, human life was close akin to the merely animal out of which it arose. Appetite — the primitive impulses, hunger, love of what is grateful to the senses — are in full control. The need of the moment is almost alone. Man is only beginning to set the possible need of to-morrow over against it. The savage gorges himself to-day. Before long, he is half starving. He is little more than an animal.

As he grows, he begins to subordinate these immediate impulses to others. He makes provision for the future. He begins to see that other and higher desires, the need of those about him, the love of children, devotion to his fellow-clansmen, demand the restraint of his first savage promptings for his own comfort. There is already in some dim sense the life of the spirit striving against the life of the animal.

So in us to-day there is, first of all, the liking to have just what we want at the moment. We are, if we permit it, slaves of our narrow, selfish happiness. We think that, if we can only get what we want, we shall be happy. Wealth seems the best thing, because it can procure for us, or promises to procure for us, the power of doing pretty much as we like and of getting what we happen to desire.

But, when we think a little more deeply, we find that the satisfaction which can come from outside us is of little value, save in relation to our power of enjoyment. You may buy fine pictures, but buying them does not give you the highest delight they can afford. To get that, you must have the faculty of appreciating them. You may own an estate; but, unless you have trained yourself to understand all that its beauty means, it

is of little value. Apart from what we are, what we have is of trifling importance.

More than that, these immediate satisfactions soon tire and are exhausted. The lover of his own mere selfish comfort grows jaded and weary. Has at last to try to kill time, because little really brings him delight. The reason is that he himself has not grown. The real wealth must be within. This is the process to which Paul refers when he says, "The wages of sin is death." Serve only your base nature, and you become a base man, to whom no high delight is possible. It is an evil thing for a *man* to remain an animal. The man in him dies.

II. Our True Manhood.

The great lesson of experience is that we may rise above appetite and the senses into that which is really human life. Plato compares the desires to fiery steeds yoked to a chariot. If we let them, they hurry us whither they will. But the real man may hold the reins, and the fiery steeds are then the driven forces which bring him to the goal of his choice.

That, in Paul's words, is the "life of the spirit." More than any selfish wish is the need that all that we do shall help us to be our true selves,—masters, not slaves; heirs of the highest and finest delight of life. As we grow toward that, we find that the best things are often those which spring from setting on one side what is merely pleasant. To love others and be able to help them is vastly finer than to set our hearts on our own ease. To use all that life brings only as opportunity by which we may grow kindly, strong, noble, quietly masters of ourselves, is the one thing to which there is no limit. We never tire of that, and in it find our true manhood. It makes for all by which life comes to its supreme satisfaction.

Man, if he realize his manhood, is like a channel through which the divine life may flow to bless and gladden the world. Only in that does he understand what manhood really means. "To be spiritually-minded is life."

III. The Law of Results.

This is not a matter of chance. It is not that in the one case God *may* reward and in the other God *may* punish. It is that always and inevitably the lower life brings only low, and the higher high and lasting satisfaction. Every time one lets a mean thought master him, he is meaner for it. The reward of seeking things that are noble is just that we have the nobility

which the search itself creates. You may live like an animal. To have lived like an animal is the only punishment. You may grow to be your best self. That in itself is your reward. The reason for determining for the one and against the other is only that in the one way you make so little and in the other so much of life. The appeal is to universal human experience, to which we find our own increasingly correspond. Low pleasures are simply not worth while when life may afford things so vastly richer and finer. To be a slave is a poor thing, indeed, when one might be a free man. You cannot live the lower life and have that which only living the higher means. Limitless possibilities are our birthright. We may "of the spirit reap eternal life." How sad it is if man fails to enter on his heritage! To have spent our years, and to remain mean, envious, selfish creatures, when we might have reached something of the ever deeper life for which Jesus stands, is the lot from which Paul would urge us to be freed.

IV. The Certainty of Success.

The result is not one for which we have to look only in some possible future state. We never choose something worthy of us but the choice brings with it its own reward. We are just by so much nearer our goal. But the road to the highest life is neither easy nor short. It is worth too much to be easy. And yet there is nothing else really worth striving for. All great teachers are perfectly frank with us. If you set before yourself only the passing gratification of the moment, your goal may be easily and swiftly attained. The work of becoming the noblest possible only begins in a lifetime. We shall often lose heart, it seems so slow. But it is no new road. All the great and good have travelled it. You never take a single step but you are that much nearer your true life. Strength, quiet self-control, kindness, the delight of noble life, come inevitably, if we keep patiently on. We are meant to be men, and behind us is the power of the universe.

Lesson XXVIII.

PAUL'S PRAYER.

FOR this cause I bow my knees unto the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.

EPHESIANS, chapter three.

PAUL'S PRAYER.

I. What is Prayer?

Although this lesson is called "Paul's Prayer," it is not altogether certain that the letter from which it comes is written by Paul. If, as seems not unlikely, it is from some unknown hand, it becomes all the more interesting, as showing us that the spirit it breathes was not in one man alone, but belonged to others in those early churches.

The old idea of prayer as a request that God do for us something which he otherwise would not have done ought by this time to be left behind.

In its essence, prayer is the habit of dwelling on those desires which rightly come to us in the moments when we seek to feel that our unseen Father is near us. So taken, no trivial or selfish thought can fill our minds, but those only which we feel to be the highest. The very attempt to make such wishes clear, and to voice them in words, if we will, strengthens all in us by which we are most truly his children.

It is in some such sense that we best get at the meaning of what this "prayer" means. Think what it meant for the writer to be able to say that what he most of all desired when he felt himself alone with the Father of all was what he has here so beautifully laid down.

II. What if This were our Chief Desire?

Think what it would mean if day by day, as the day ends perhaps, we were able to let such wishes rise in our hearts. What, if, when we gather together to worship, prayer were no mere official part of a service, but the common endeavor to let all that belongs to our highest life come quietly into consciousness. How it would deepen and strengthen our real life! How truly we might say that so to pray is its own answer! Lesser things lose their power. The unworthy part of life shows itself in its true littleness. We are more ready to live the life which draws us in high moments. Prayer is getting to feel the power of the divine life, which we only partly understand.

In some such way as this, let us look at the noble aspiration

which the writer tells his brethren rose in his heart at the thought of the need which was his and theirs.

III. That the Divine Life may grow Strong in us.

We are children of the infinite goodness and love, of which all human life at its highest is only an imperfect expression. We only know what life means in the measure in which this wealth of divine life becomes ours. It is weak at first. We have to battle against selfishness. What is less good often appeals to us more strongly because it is near. But in high moments, when we are true to ourselves, what can we desire half so good as that the best, kindest, largest life in us may grow strong? That in time things which seem difficult may grow easy? That what seems like denial of self now may come to be just the intense delight of being true to ourselves? That life now so weak and poor may come to be like the great tide of the infinite life coursing through us? That we may "be strengthened with power through his spirit in the inward man"? That our real life may come to be natural, spontaneous, instinctive, till all that is less worthy loses its hold?

That is manhood as the writer thought of it. It was in the strength of a great truth like this that men were built up whom no terror could make afraid, to whom religion became delight in finding how noble life really is.

IV. The Growth of the Spirit of Confidence.

Confidence, faith, is half the battle. That which most often holds us back is the half-defined sense that these things are far out of reach. Ideal dreams, if you will, but belonging to a world which is not this common world.

But it is intensely real to thousands like us. And it has become real through faith. Before us on the road are the great and good of all ages. Men and women like ourselves, who have been persuaded to try to become strong and noble and true by seeing how life grew to be noble and true in the great Teacher himself. His message and theirs to each one of us is that, if we will only try for it, we, too, may come to know the delight of growing into splendid natural strength of character. We shall fail again and again. But never mind. Keep on. Get into the habit of assuring ourselves that the good in us will out in the end, just as it has grown to be strongest of all in others and in Jesus himself.

We do feel that the best in us is, after all, our real nature.

When we lose hold of that, let us get into the quiet presence of those who have gone before us on the journey and take heart. That is what faith means. Faith that the Christ spirit, which is our own real life, will at length come to dwell with us as the constant, habitual, beautiful temper of our life. After all, is it not just letting the infinite, divine energy which is back of everything rise in us as our own true life?

V. The Fulness of Life.

When we rise to such thoughts, it does seem as though all the world were but the slow process by which the divine fulness comes to expression. Low life everywhere giving place to higher is the order of the universe. The plant cannot be final. The animal is higher. But there is no stopping there. Man has to rise out of the animal. The fulness of life must needs find some larger expression. And we are part of the process. It is not we who, in our own strength, are striving against nature. It is only the whole power of life trying in us and through us to rise to something higher still.

Out of his own experience the writer tells us how we may come to understand that, as life rises, it grows simpler and kinder, till the little selfish life is left behind and we come to get hold of the meaning of the true human life of love of all divine things and of all men. Life is no weary task. It is only learning as children learn how to grow into fuller delight and closer kinship with one another.

VI. Prayer may Help.

Put it in what form you will, merely to keep remembering what is so clear and real to us in Jesus and in every noble human life does make it more possible for us. Lesser things crowd it out. But in quiet hours, perhaps most easily in church, when we gather in the name of the unseen Father, what if we were to set ourselves again and again toward this ideal? One thing is sure. We should grow towards it, and find for ourselves how true it is. We never once try but we are already nearer it. To what fulness that love of our noblest life as we see it in Jesus may grow "passeth all understanding."

Lesson XXIX.

THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD.

FINALLY, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

EPHESIANS, chapter six.

THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD.

I. Christian Life in the Church.

It seems very probable that this letter, though written in Paul's name, belongs to the circle of Christian teachers who carried on his work after he was gone. It was quite common in those days, when authorship was not looked upon as it is with us, for a writing to be sent forth under some well-known name instead of that of the writer. We have seen many instances of it in our study of the Old Testament books and of the Apocrypha.

In the case of this letter the suggestion that it is not from Paul's hand lends additional interest to the counsel of the lesson. It is no longer as if noble exhortation of this kind came to us from one man alone. It is the spirit of the leaders of the early church. Its inspiration is that of a wide and common experience, and its ideal is that of a community. Much of the literature which it created has been lost. In this letter, and in that to the Colossians, we have, however, evidence that what we have in our New Testament is only a slight and fragmentary survival.

It is interesting to note that this letter was a circular letter. In the first verse the words "at Ephesus" have been filled in later. In their place there was at first a blank space into which the name of the church to which the individual copies, as they were made, could be directed. This fact helps us better to grasp the wide range of the letter.

II. The Battle of Life.

When this letter was written, it meant a conflict against fearful odds for any one to become a Christian. Tacitus, the Roman historian, speaks of Christianity as a "pestilential superstition." Persecutions were matters of daily occurrence. It meant something to dare to fight the good fight of faith under such conditions.

While for us this is all changed, the underlying task of life remains the same. The shallow, selfish life, the love of ease, the appeal to what is not noble in us, still make it true that the

way of our true life is still — in some, at least, of its aspects — a battle. We must meet it in the spirit in which these older souls under very different conditions met the same facts.

The secret of their power lay in the habit of relying on those things which appeal to the best in us, and appeal with ever-increasing power as we come to know them. Let us consider some of those inner realities of which our lesson speaks as making the whole armor of God, through which men were able to stand, and not to fall.

III. The Shield of Faith.

It has been only too common in the days, which we are but now getting to outgrow, to think of faith as though it meant assent to certain articles of belief. A man who believed the creeds was a Christian. A man who did not accept them was an infidel, or an unbeliever. The awkward thing was, that the unbeliever often fought the good fight of life with at least as much success as his brother, who was less mentally active. That fact alone would force us to some better thought of what was meant by this faith which, to the writer, was like a strong shield against all that tried to lower life.

It is a little hard to get a word which fitly expresses it. Confident assurance that the best man in us must win in the end, just as it was victorious in the Master, describes it in part. When a man lost heart and inclined to give up the fight, new courage came to him when he remembered that he was not making some solitary experiment which might turn out well or might not. The sense that he, after all, was only making the experiment which the greater souls before him had already made, and that they all with one voice reassure him of victory, was new strength to him. The message of the gospel was that he was no slave, but a free man and a child of God, a comrade of Jesus. About him were men who, like the Master, had realized that in actual experience. So faith wakens. As he makes the experience for himself, it comes to rest on what he knows for himself. It keeps him more and more from losing heart. It is the secret of success at last. You *are* a free man after the pattern of Jesus; and you may realize for yourself if you will only set your heart on it, and keep patiently on.

IV. The Helmet of Salvation.

Here, again, we have to make clear that salvation is not escape from the future eternal penalty of unbelief. Chris-

tianity, as a passport system, ought to be forgotten. Salvation, as a result to be secured in the hereafter through the power of church or creed, is too unreal to be of much service in the battle. But, if we take it in its simpler meaning, it is a constant assurance of success. It means perfect personal health, not of body merely, but of character. As we little by little get out of the power of all in us which we know to be unworthy, we are finding out what it means. Salvation comes to us day by day, as the real self gets the upper hand. It is the experience of real life expanding and becoming fine in us, so that those things which used to appeal to us lose their power because we are coming to know something which affords a nobler satisfaction. Jesus called it the kingdom of God. He meant the rule of the highest in us, over all that would hinder that splendid quality of obedience to the finest impulses alone. Men are saved by becoming what they were meant to be. We see what they were meant to be by remembering what lay within the range of the lowly Nazarene peasant, Jesus, just because he, too, was a man. Salvation need not be a far-off, unreal thing, but that in which there is our constant delight,—the sense that we are growing not in years only, but in those things which give real and lasting quality to life.

V. Truth ; Righteousness ; Peace.

These are, after all, only different aspects of what we have been considering. Truth, not hearsay. What we know for ourselves, because we have made experience of it, instead of what we merely accept because people say so. Truth, not falsehood. The life and the ideal in harmony, not at variance. It is one of the fine elements of life.

Righteousness. Straightforwardness expresses it. The delight of a clear, strong path, under guidance of high ideals. High character and the glory of it.

Peace. Not ease, idle ease, nor freedom from what we do not like, but the repose of ordered power. The noisy steam-tug is unrest. The vast liner as it leaves her, or the silent turbines at Niagara tell us what peace is. It is so when life grows deep and quiet and invincible.

Lesson XXX.

PRESSING ON TOWARD THE GOAL.

YEA verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ : that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death ; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect : but I am pressing on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended : but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I am pressing on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded ; and, if in anything ye are otherwise minded, even this shall God reveal unto you : only, whereunto we have already attained, by that same rule let us walk.

PHILIPPIANS, chapter three.

PRESSING ON TOWARD THE GOAL.

I. Paul's Personal Experience.

The one chief charm of Paul's letters and the secret of their power is the fact that they come right from his heart. They do not appear to have any system or method or style about them. They just bubble up out of a warm heart, full of the intensest interest in his comrades in the little churches round the Ægean Sea. In this chapter, especially, he is on his defence against those who declared that he was no true apostle. As he says, "If any of them think they can boast of their pre-eminent advantages, I have more to boast of than they have." Then, after running over the things which men of the type of his opponents set stock on, he tells us that he threw everything of that sort overboard, because they were only rubbish compared with the chance of getting to be a man after the pattern of Jesus Christ. It is this personal experience which is his chief power. I do not hold this as a mere theory, he says. I have tried it myself, have sacrificed everything for it, and now after thirty years find that the loss is nothing compared with the gain. I used to be a Pharisee, with all the advantages of rank and birth and a career. Now I am but a poor leader of a despised sect. But now I am a *man*. It has been well worth it.

II. What caused the Change?

Elsewhere he tells us that "it was God's good pleasure to reveal his Son in me." He means that on the Damascus journey, almost as by an inspiration, it came to him that, to be a man and *live* after the fashion of the Nazarene, whose followers he was persecuting, was something of far greater moment and promise than anything he had yet even dreamed of. As he here tells us, he had to give up everything, and now looks upon this as mere useless rubbish in comparison. But the vision of growing up to be a man like Jesus has grown in strength and beauty. As he here says, what Jesus *was* laid hold of him. He is ever pressing on, that he may lay hold of it in his own experience.

Religion had been almost nothing more than adherence to

a political party which offered him a career under certain conditions of obedience. Now he sees it as the unfolding of a man's real free life in obedience to his noblest possibilities. He saw it in Jesus Christ. As he says, he "saw the glory of God shining for him in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6). He felt that it was something possible also for him. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." That which seems to him like the Christ-life growing up in him is *his* real life. Nothing else is of any moment. It is the high calling of God to every man to be the man that he really is. The call comes to us when we see in the life of the Master what we, too, may be.

III. The Process.

Here in the lesson he makes it clear to us that this is no affair of a moment. True though it is, that the resolve to take a new way of life was a thing come to quickly, the new road is long, endlessly long. There is no limit to the possibilities of our growth along the line of our highest. Life is inexhaustible in its possibilities. Here, after thirty years of strenuous living, he says he does not seem to have real hold of it yet. He is only on the road stretching out to the glorious possibilities of fuller life which are ahead of him.

He describes the process as though it were in some sort a reproduction in his own life of the experience which was also that of Jesus. He is getting to understand in himself the power which lifted Jesus beyond the mastery of death itself. Suffering only kills the mean man in me: I, too, in that sense am put to death, even as he was. But, then, out of it I, too, the real I, rise with the power of his resurrection. The figure is strange to us. To Paul with such close personal loyalty to his "Lord," it is natural enough. Day by day he said to himself that he, too, is on the same road, making the same experiences with the same glorious and inevitable result.

In modern phrase, we, too, find the same results. The confident assurance that it *is* worth while to let the best in us have the upper hand results in lesser things losing hold of us. Even ill circumstances only deepen our sense of the quality of our real life. We rise on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things.

It is slow, as all real growth is. But the process by which a man comes to win his true life is always slow. He lays the

weight of his will on the side of the best of him, lets the higher dreams get a little more control, till so to do becomes a habit. Then, after a time, wider horizons open. What was aimed at has become a constant temper and attitude, easy and habitual. But beyond finer ideals are opening, and wider horizons. He who has travelled farthest on that road is he who sees most ahead. Only the man who does not grow at all thinks that life is complete. He whose delight comes to be in the unfolding of the qualities of his manhood in something of their range and intensity, has before him an endless journey.

"All experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravelled world whose margin fades
Forever and forever when we move."

IV. The Main Condition.

The phrase, "One thing I am doing," gets at the secret. It is not likely that any dream will realize itself, however fair it be, unless we make it *our* dream. Explain it as you will, what we call personal resolve is necessary for any high development. In Paul this is very marked. When the new life opens out to his thought, he claims it at once. From that time it is the one thing above all others in which he is interested. Whatever comes, the main thing to him is that he shall get to be the man he really is. It gives a unity and a strength to all his life which few have. There is a certain intensity and vim and swing to it which never comes to any mind which is flabby in its decisions. If it is good and you are sure of it, set your hand and heart to it and keep on. Then results are sure in their inevitable season.

V. The Power which makes it Possible.

Paul called it the power of God in Christ Jesus. When we say that it is the tide of the divine life, which is behind all things rising in and through us, we say the same thing. But it comes to us most strongly when it is concrete. After all, loyalty to an abstraction is hard. But we can love and admire good men and be strong in the sense of fellowship with them. That is why religion to Paul meant a kind of personal loyalty, which is a power.

Lesson XXXI.

CHRISTIAN AMBITION.

I HAVE learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, set your hearts on these things. The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, those things do.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS, chapter four.

CHRISTIAN AMBITION.

I. I have learned the Secret.

We have all of us read of the old search for the elixir of life, whereby length of years is to be attained. But length of years is dependent altogether, as regards its value, on the quality of life. Over circumstances we have, after all, very little control. Good or ill fortune are things we can rarely either court or avoid. Yet whether the fortune that comes to us is good or ill depends, after all, mainly on what we ourselves are. A disaster which is great to a little man is only a new incentive to a brave one. This is the secret which Paul declares he has found.

Greene says, "A mind content both crown and kingdom is." Paul tells us, "Let each man have his glorying with regard to himself alone." Best of all, he himself had demonstrated its possibility. Whether storm came, or sunshine,—courage, hope, self-control, the sense of the larger life, were things over which they had no power. These, moreover, make the goodness of life. When a man has such qualities, all else (beyond his control as it is) matters little. He has the secret of life in himself.

Was it not good news, indeed, which Paul preached? That, after all, we ourselves may be, not the puny slaves of fate, but masters. That what seems evil and hard we can use to our own strengthening. That the rock which threatens to stop the course of the stream only makes in the end a deep and quiet pool. That the very best things that life can know are things which no fate can take from us.

When we read his life, we know that he spoke of what he himself had proved in face of the hardest fate. Such witness is truth, indeed.

II. The Method he followed.

The way to this secret is the burden of all that Paul writes. Here, in the noble counsel with which our lesson closes, he tells us that it lies in setting our hearts on those things which are part of our own highest life. Too often we allow ourselves to think at happiness comes from our surroundings. If fate is good to

us, we are happy. If she frowns, we lose what makes life. But, if we have learned to love above all else the enlarging of our real life, this is no longer so. Human nature is a thing so large in its powers, that it can find in its own growth something more than the passing sunshine or shadow. Only set our hearts quietly and constantly on the chief good, and little by little we come to know of our own experience that the chief good is something which misfortune cannot take away. Though you cannot own riches, you may be rich. Though you cannot be sure of an easy way, you may indeed win, what is far better, the power to grow strong through the very hardness you feared. If strength, goodness, the sense of growing personal quality, are the things we most love, our content is not in the hands of our surroundings; for these are independent of them. Set your hearts on these things, and there is quietness within, however the storm rage without. The good man is always in good company, most of all when he is alone.

What are some of these things on which the man who knew tells us to set our hearts?

III. The Things that are Nobly Serious.

This is Matthew Arnold's translation for the "things honorable" of the lesson. It is good. If life is shallow and frivolous merely, it lacks strength to stand. If its satisfaction lies in things that are not noble, it is something which we soon exhaust. But if under all lies the love of what is nobly serious, large, and deep and lasting, part of the finest nature we are capable of, we have indeed large resources. Dwell on them. Rejoice in them. Let the day-dreams of quiet moments be of these things. Get into the habit of looking on such as our heritage. Then, even as the flower which turns sunward wins fragrance and beauty, life grows fine. Moreover, it grows strong as well. The heart of its joy gets to lie deep. Its very depth is seriousness, deeper far than the passing gleam of the surface. So it comes to sovereign power.

IV. Lovely and of Good Report.

We read of Jesus that the power of God in him lay in his gracious kindness. Paul here speaks of the same thing. The man whose life is large is, as he grows, lifted above the pettiness out of which half the ill of life is born. Men take offence only because they themselves are small. As the old saying runs, "It shows great pride and little sense." If we will, we may so

set our hearts on the things that are winsome and quietly gracious, that we are lifted right out of the atmosphere where the little irritations are our masters, What our translation calls lovely means, rather, lovable. The power of Jesus was his lovableness. All but the mean love a real man. Somehow, the world cannot help feeling the power of gracious, winsome, largeness of heart. It is the greatest thing in the world and the most mighty. In one of our recent lessons we read that the faith that is said to remove mountains is as nothing beside it. Paul tells us that part of his secret is to get to love the lovable, to set our heart on it. In proportion as we really do so, it inevitably becomes ours. We only fail when we have really set our hearts on something less.

In the margin we read another rendering for "of good report." And yet, when we get right down to it, the old words suggest a very real meaning. Not what people speak well of, but what rings true. The goodness and kindness which have the genuine ring about them, which no one can ever hope to counterfeit. It is perfectly easy and natural, when it is the spontaneous outcome of a nature that has for long set its heart on these things. It is the atmosphere of a man who has outgrown his childhood, and come to the true temper of self-mastery through delight in the highest.

V. Is this Practical?

Paul certainly found it so. Not only he, moreover. What we know as real culture is its result. What a difference there is between the bearing of a really large nature and the amusing bigness of the little man! The difference lies in the lesson. The secret is the setting of the heart on things which are really fine.

Moreover, it is part of the inexorable order of the universe. You can no more let sunlight in on a sensitive plate without results, than you can let fine things appeal to your heart without growing better thereby. Set your hearts on things like these, and the slow result is certain as the spring.

Lesson XXXII.

THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST.

FOR we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need. For our high priest is one who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation.

HEBREWS, chapters four and five.

THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST.

I. The Letter to the Hebrews.

As we have seen in the introductory lesson to these passages from the New Testament, this letter is not by Paul. It is so thoroughly Jewish in tone that for a while there was considerable doubt as to its obtaining a place with the other writings of the New Testament. It is, however, of quite early date, probably earlier by at least a decade than the earliest of our Gospels.

We see this in one or two points in the letter itself. In ix. 8 we read of the first tabernacle as still standing, which could hardly have been written after 70 A.D., when the temple was destroyed under Titus. The expectation of the speedy return of the Lord is akin to that which we have seen in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. iv. 13-17). We see this, for instance, in Hebrews (x. 25, 37).

We do not know who wrote the letter. Its title implies that it was directed specially to Jew Christians. We understand it aright only as we keep this in mind.

II. Its Jewish Point of View.

We see this in several ways.

The reference to the earlier dispensation or covenant, which looked to Moses as its author, as well as the constant citations of Jewish history, would be of comparatively little meaning to foreign readers. Its contrast of the more spiritual religion for which Jeremiah hoped (viii. 8-12), to this earlier covenant would have little meaning to them. It is, however, of special interest to those of us who have already studied the great Jerusalem preacher's picture of the religion of the heart.

We see this Jewish tone, too, on the idea of sacrifice, especially in the famous text "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (ix. 22). The statement is untrue in itself, and wholly so when it is applied to the death of Jesus. It had its meaning only for Jews. For them the statement is fundamental to the entire religion of the second temple.

Our lesson, too, in its picture of the high priest and the usages of the great day of atonement, is only vivid to those to

whom these things formed the familiar and most imposing part of the annual temple ceremonial.

III. The Underlying Attitude towards Jesus.

What makes the lesson of value to us is that underneath all this Jewish symbolism there lies the sense that Jesus is indeed a power to help us, because he was a man like ourselves. The whole lesson reiterates the thought of ii. 18,—“in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.”

At the heart of early Christianity lay a personal loyalty. It was everything to the first disciples. Their thought of their Master was never clear. Even at the last they do not seem to have understood him. After he was gone, their anticipation of his speedy return to set up his kingdom on earth is as far from the truth as their ideas as to that kingdom while he was with them. But, in spite of it all, the power of the beauty of the Lord whom they loved, they knew not why, grew and spread. It was the living contagion of a noble human life, which no ignorance and no superstition could take away, that created Christian character.

Here, too, in an atmosphere thoroughly Jewish, and laden with ideas which we have long outgrown, we find the same thing. Jesus is one of ourselves. He too suffers and learns obedience; is touched with the feeling of our weakness; becomes perfect only through the lessons of experience. The writer loves to think of him as tried in all points like as we are, and yet unconquered. In all the dark hours of persecution, when it was hard to hold to hope in the very face of death itself, they turned for strength to him who “offered up prayers with strong crying and tears,” and became perfect in the end.

Through the ignorance of the time this picture of Jesus as the strong, beautiful human ideal, practicable for us too because he was one with us in all his experience, shines like a constant inspiration. It is that which makes our lesson one of the “Great Passages.” Jesus can show us the road to live, because he travelled it as we have to, under our conditions, and in all the weakness of our nature. It is the gospel of the human Christ finding voice even in the writing of the Jew Christian.

IV. The Theological Development.

In the dogmas of modern orthodoxy we have the natural result of the belief in the Bible as all of it of equal value.

Those who based the creeds on the Bible embodied in their system of belief from such writings as this Epistle elements which ought to have been long outgrown. The idea that the death of Jesus and the acceptance of its efficacy were essential to salvation is the result of the logical development of the Jewish thought in writings like our letter. The curious thing sometimes is that, while they, for instance, give great prominence to the thought of Jesus as the sacrifice, the passages which set him forth as the high priest receive little attention.

The true method is that which we have tried to follow here. We must discard those elements which distort the writer's presentation of the facts, and get behind them to the facts of experience themselves. In so doing, we at once get clear of the theological deductions from the writers' statements by discovering their origin.

V. The Simpler Gospel.

In so far as we do this, we come back to the simple inspiration in which Christianity found its first mighty impulse. We cease to be interested in the interpretation which those facts received when seen through the current religious beliefs of the first century. We get at the heart of a passage like our lesson, and forget its form.

That is largely what is going on in the revolution of Christian thought which is being forced on the churches in our own time. Men are asking more and more for that human ideal and human inspiration which made Christianity possible. They are having to set on one side the theological presentation of it in the alien speech of earlier days.

The Jesus who helps men is the Jesus of whose human experience our lesson speaks. It is to the fact that his life is akin to ours that his power to uplift and inspire is due. He enters the world as does every human child. The battle of life we fight is the battle which he faced. He is a comrade on the very road we all travel. As we see in him our own true nature, there comes to us that blessed contagion of human goodness which is the hope of the world.

Lesson XXXIII.

PRACTICAL RELIGION.

BUT be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. For if any one is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will shew thee my faith. Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and shudder. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren.

JAMES, chapters one and two.

PRACTICAL RELIGION.

I. The Apparent Contradiction between James and Paul.

Luther, following Paul, as he thought, made the chief doctrine of religion that of justification by faith. As a result, he called this Epistle of James an "epistle of straw," and wondered that it was ever permitted to take its place in the Bible. The contradiction between Paul and the writer of this letter is, on the surface at least, very marked. Paul says, "We are justified by faith," and "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." James says the very devils have faith and that faith without works is dead and useless.

But when we remember that this letter was written to counteract not Paul's teaching, but the later doctrine that a man was justified in the sight of God by accepting a belief, the contradiction disappears. Paul said that a man may conform to all kinds of religious observances and modes of conduct, and still be a bad man at heart. James said that a man might believe all the statements of the great Christian teacher and yet not be half so good a man as an unbeliever whose life was unselfish and helpful. The moment we state it in this way, we see that each is equally true.

II. Faith as Paul meant it is not Mere Acceptance of Beliefs.

When James says (James ii. 19), "The devil is a believer; nay, more, he believes truly enough to be afraid," Paul would have agreed with him. It is obvious that the more ignorant a man is, the more readily he is able to accept beliefs of almost any character. But his readiness to accept them has nothing to do with the man's goodness. It witnesses only to the fact that he is uneducated, or thoughtless, or a fool. It is obvious that a man who denies all the articles of a creed may be a better man than one who accepts them all. Creed or belief or faith, in this sense, is utterly indifferent in matters of religion. As the writer of this letter says, you may be correct enough in your belief, and yet be a devil.

But faith, as Paul meant it, is something very different

from this. It is an enthusiastic conviction that your real life is like the life of Jesus, and that the supreme thing for you is to come to find that out for yourself. It means that you are confidently setting yourself to allow this which is your real nature to become the power of your life. The example, the counsel, the power of your enthusiastic loyalty to Jesus, gradually help you to become your true self, as one of the children of God.

Religion is not a set of habits or observances imposed on you from without through fear or from any other cause. It is the rising within of the sense of the beauty of the better life of kindness and truth.

III. Works do not mean Outer Conformity.

In the same way the external conduct in which the inner spirit expresses itself is an inevitable result of faith in this sense. You cannot be really in love with kindness without acting kindly. You cannot believe in Jesus as Paul did, save in so far as the spirit which is his spirit is alive within you. You cannot be a man really of this unselfish temper without inevitably acting unselfishly.

On the other hand, you may do things which bear the mark of unselfishness from all sorts of motives. It may be from love of praise or from love of advantage in business or to advertise yourself. Paul would call this a case of works without faith, and decide, truly enough, that that is no evidence of the real quality of life.

It is the same with religious observances. To be of real value, they ought to be the natural outcome of the inner life in its need of help and inspiration. A man may go to church and keep the Sabbath, and avoid theatres and dancing, not in any sense because he is a good man, but because the people around him make conduct like this the mark of respectability. This sort of thing is of no value, Paul says. A man is saved by faith alone; that is, by the inner temper and spirit which is the real power of his life.

IV. Religion from Within.

This brings us to the point where the new religious impulse which created Christianity broke loose from Judaism. Judaism was the religion of external conformity to commands. It produced a correct life, and left men often without inspiration or vitality or real goodness. They did what was legally right, and were satisfied. That is not goodness. Jesus struck

a higher note. It is what a man is that matters. His very goodness may often lead him to break outer standards. To follow the kindly helpfulness of your own heart is more than to keep the Sabbath. To obey the love of your fellow and to help the man by the roadside makes you a better man, even though you are a heathen, than to think of your own religious contamination, and pass by on the other side with the priest and the Levite.

Paul follows this up. Conformity to external standards is not religion. Religion is the awakening within of the higher nature. Then you learn to love goodness and to act rightly, because it is the thing you love most of all. This is faith. You believe in the life which you see in really good men. You come to obey it in yourself, and to feel it grow up in you as your real life. Your actions are its natural result and expression. Even where you fail because the inner life is not yet strong, you are in a more really good relation to God than if you were acting out of mere conformity or fear.

V. Practical Religion.

Faith in this sense is the most practical thing in the world. External rules of conduct can never meet all cases. What is right in one case (as in giving money to mendicants) is wrong in another. But, if you learn to love goodness and truth and the chance of really helping your fellows, then you have an inner rule which makes the necessary distinctions. You can never make a people righteous by acts of parliament. You cannot make a man righteous by constraining him to do what are considered righteous acts. You can do both by awakening the best nature in men, and letting them find out that the finest satisfaction comes only through obedience to their own best. Faith which is not the power of his best over a man's life is not faith. Real faith is the awakening of the noblest nature in us as the power which all conduct comes to express. Religion is then real. It is simply high, natural, spontaneous life.

Lesson XXXIV.

THE GROWTH OF CHARACTER.

GRACE to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature. Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness love of the brethren; and in your love of the brethren love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

THE GROWTH OF CHARACTER.

I. Religion as an Enthusiasm.

The first thing that strikes the careful reader of the New Testament is the enthusiastic attitude of its writers. They are as men who have made a great discovery. They go around telling the good news. Their language is one of an entirely new hopefulness and courage in the world. Nothing could daunt it. They were very largely poor people. He whom they called their Master was an obscure Galilean peasant who was crucified. They themselves were persecuted and hunted into the holes and corners of the earth. Cultured people spoke of the new religion as a pestilent superstition. Yet no writings on earth are so full of overflowing life as these ill-written letters and narratives which form our New Testament.

Jesus goes around telling men good news about God and life. He says it is as though the great king had made a wedding feast for men. The joy of it is like the joy of one who is willing to sell all that he has to attain the object of his desire. Paul has the same tone. I counted all that a man usually values, as nothing in comparison with the discovery, he says. "I have found the secret," he writes. "I am pressing on toward the high calling of God." "Now are we the sons of God, and what we shall be passes our thought," writes the author of the First Epistle of John. Here in our letter we read that we are to become "partakers of the divine nature."

Life has obviously become a new thing to these men. What do they tell us about it?

II. Faith is its Beginning.

The first step was the awakening in a man's heart of the confidence that this delight in the better life, and its fine spontaneous impulse, was possible for him. They saw it in Jesus, and he helped them to feel that the new temper which was in him was in them also. With Paul it was the same. He says, "It was God's good pleasure to reveal his Son in me." He made the discovery or came to the conviction that a life like that of Jesus was not only possible, but was the only real human

life. He carried the message that that was the life which God meant men to live, and that behind it was God's power to develop it in every man who would allow it to open out within him. "Only believe," is his cry. Then you will make the experience for yourself of what it means to find the better self getting the upper hand. You will find out by actual trial that what God wills you to be is good and perfect and acceptable. This is religion. Take it on trust at first that, because others have found it so, you can. Then in the new hope go on to find it out yourself.

III. Its Nature is a Limitless Progress.

The act of faith is only a beginning. The process of learning to live as a man may live is a slow one. Its growth is like the leaven, says Jesus. After thirty years of it Paul says that he has not in any way fully laid hold of it. He is only pressing on. "What God hath for those that love him hath not entered into the heart of man."

But every step is a gain. To learn that goodness is not an alien thing imposed under penalty, but only the very finest experience in the world, chosen with joy simply because there is nothing else so good, is a slow matter. Yet it is sure, for it is but the unfolding and maturing of our nature. The delight of growing along the line of our true life is the inspiration of which we have been speaking.

Note some of the points in the progress, as our lesson speaks of them.

IV. Virtue.

This does not mean "be virtuous" in the sense in which we use the word. It is the old Roman idea of the spirit of valor. Cultivate the spirit of valorous courage in your faith. Get into the way of never allowing yourself to take any other attitude toward your own life than that of a man erect, virile, fearless, undaunted. That is half the battle. Let your faith as it grows become a thing about which is the air of manhood growing conscious of itself. This new life is the surest thing in the world. Faith is not a half certainty. It is an attitude which, as it grows, justifies and creates the vital temper of one who is sure of victory in the end.

V. Knowledge.

Here is meant rather personal experience. We begin by taking the possibility of the control of the best in us on trust.

We come after a time to know it for ourselves. Faith ought to grow. The things which lie before us are matters of faith, believed in because those of wider experience have found them so. But the things with which we start become matter of knowledge. We have found them out for ourselves. In proportion to the measure in which we have grown into our true life is our personal certainty of its fine satisfaction and our faith in its further possibilities. Get to know it for yourself, says our lesson. Set about it bravely and confidently. You will grow sure as you go on, and readier to go on eagerly to still finer quality of life and character.

VI. Temperance: Self-mastery.

At first, of course, it is not easy. The life that loves simply what is pleasant and appeals to the senses, that is the slave of its foolish desires and impulses, is not a thing to be outgrown in a moment. We are only children. Manhood is not won by a jump. But the power to let the real man in us quietly control both thought and conduct will surely come if we set our heart on it. Life which drifts here and there, just as inclination moves, is not life at all. The real joy of living is when one has hold of the reins and directs one's course. In time, things outside will lose something of their power. We shall love to be ourselves so much that mere likes and dislikes lose hold, and we become masters of our fate. So to live is *life*.

VII. Entering the Kingdom.

This process of the unfolding of life to fuller power and finer issues is what the writer calls entering the kingdom, coming to have divine things within us king over all else. He speaks of an "abundant entrance." It is not mere escape from ill. It is the rich filling out of life with the growing sense of its ever wider range and quality. It is the joy for which we read that Jesus "endured the cross." That is real religion.

Lesson XXXV.

THE CITY OF GOD.

AND I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it. And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there): and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away.

THE CITY OF GOD.

I. The Ideal Society.

Whenever human life has been strong and hope high, men have pictured the ideal future of society in which the evils which now are shall have passed away. In the present imperfect condition of things, there is always so much apparently inevitable misery and wrong that, so long as there is in human nature the desire for something better, such pictures will continue. They are all of them imperfect, for it is given to none to forecast the future; and we cannot even imagine the complex product of human life and thought and society as it unfolds. But they are of value as showing us how continually upward the inexorable trend of human life is, and as a stimulus to build new pictures of the future as inspiration toward the realization of that which shall be higher than they.

Nay, our own happiness is so bound up with the happiness of those among whom we live that it seems impossible for us to attain to the best life for ourselves, except in so far as we can raise the life of all. The religious or life ideal for the individual is only possible in relation to the ever higher life ideal and better organization of the community.

II. Paul's Thought of it.

The figure of which he is most fond is that of the body. The body is one, but has many members. These members are different in the work they have to do, but the good of each part is bound up with the good of the whole. No part can live to itself. The good of the whole is attainable only as the result of the good of each of the parts.

As each individual grows into that life of service for which he is best fitted, so the society on the welfare of which he himself depends becomes strong. The aim of life to Paul is for each one to grow up into the realization of the possibilities that are in him through contributing his part toward the building up of the whole. He looks for the day when we "shall all attain unto the measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ." Of the society itself he says that it, "according to the due working

of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love."

III. The Book of Revelation.

This book was originally a Jewish writing, telling, as the writer conceived, how by supernatural interference the dark history of the times of Nero is to be turned into the fulfilment of the Messianic expectation. It seems by a few additions in the body of the book to have been adapted for Christian use. The opening addresses to the churches are part of this later material.

The passage in our lesson tells of the coming of the New Jerusalem. The old empires are to pass away. Then through an opening in the skies the New Jerusalem is to be let down out of heaven from God, and planted on the sacred Mount Zion. The new age, which is thus to be introduced as the fulfilment of all things, is something in which all that we know of the order of the universe has no part. There is no more sun. The sea — always an object of dislike to the Hebrews — is to disappear. The Jewish tribes and those who accept their religion are to enter into the holy city, where God's people are to reign forever and ever.

In spite of its impossible nature and the imperfect thought of the world which underlies it, there is a wonderful beauty in this longing of the persecuted people for the time when mourning and crying and pain shall have passed away forever.

The writer and those who received the book in its altered form into the use of the early church expected some such supernatural interference in their immediate future. The half-veiled references of the book are all to the current history about them. It is in an apocalyptic or semi-secret form, the story of how God will interfere to put an end to all the horrors of the later Roman Empire, and bring in the golden age he had promised to his people.

IV. Other Forms.

It is interesting to compare with this other forms in which men have pictured the ideal society of the future. Plato's Republic is one of the most interesting. Augustine's City of God, which gives the title to this lesson, is another. In more modern times More's "Utopia," and recently Bellamy's "Looking Backward," and Morris's "News from Nowhere" are of most interest to us. Looked at as actual practicable schemes, it is easy to demonstrate the absurdity of any one of them. But, like Rous-

seau's picture of the State of Nature, to which men are to return, they have each their place in moulding the aspirations and aims of men.

More interesting still is their witness to the indomitable courage with which the human spirit reaches out to the future. Some of them, perhaps, most of all, Morris's "News from Nowhere," breathe a spirit which is almost an inspiration.

V. How is the Better Future to be hastened?

Obviously, it would be impossible to put any cut-and-dried plan into operation. The real course of the growth of society is beyond our thought. But one or two things are clear.

Its aim must be a state of society in which each has the conditions under which he can best realize the capacities of service which are in him. Only as each part becomes capable of its finest work can the whole reach its own highest. And similarly only as the whole approaches that are those conditions possible.

In short, the future is to be reached by the endeavor of each to be the best self possible, and to do all he can to make that possible for others, so that it may be possible for himself. The unselfish life and the life of high selfishness are one. You seek your own good in seeking the good of others. If you fail to seek the latter, you fail in the former.

Now this is the modern idea of religion of which these lessons have spoken so much. It is not a plan for getting our souls into heaven when we die. It is an endeavor to catch in every way we can the power whereby our life may develop the very best that is in us for our own good and the good of all. The ideal city is born of the ideal man. And the ideal man finds himself in the good of his fellows. Jesus called it the coming of the kingdom of God, and tells us that to live for it is our highest good.

Lesson XXXVI.

INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

I THANK God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of thee in my supplications; having been reminded of the unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and, I am persuaded, in thee also. For the which cause I put thee in remembrance that thou stir into flame the gift of God which is in thee. For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and sobriety. Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Abide in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.

INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

I. The Great Opportunity.

This letter, though written in Paul's name, as was very common in these letters of the Christian Church, belongs to the later age when he and his companions had all passed away. But the splendid temper and high ideals which were theirs meet us still.

Catch the fine attitude toward life. It is the grand chance of getting to know how divine manhood is. Power, love, sobriety, are what God has in store for men. We are to go forth to meet them, not as those who are afraid, but in the strong, eager spirit of men who are becoming conscious of their heritage. It is God's gift, and the writer bids Timothy stir it into flame in his heart. The opportunity of learning to live as God means men to live should burn like the kindling of eager joy. Such is the noble tone of our lesson.

II. The Power of Noble Example.

It is for this reason that Timothy is reminded of those who have gone before him. We are greatly dependent on the influences which are about us, and it is well if we learn to give all that is great among them an abiding place among the things on which our heart dwells. It is no little thing when our parents have been folk of whom we can be truly proud.

But we are not limited to those of whose blood we are. It is well for the inspiration of life to keep constantly in mind all those who have made life rise high and ring true. So best does the constant sense of how rich and strong life may be in us become a power. We see in others what the latent possibilities of our own life are, and win through imitation, often unconscious, the unfolding of like possibilities in our own character.

III. The Inspiration of Scripture.

The next thing the writer dwells on is the power of the "sacred writings" to help unfold character.

It is interesting to remember that what he meant was the Old Testament alone. There was no New Testament for long years after his time. We must recall, too, that in those days writings of any sort were rare. There was then none of that

wealth of noble literature which is open to us. Probably the only writings accessible to Timothy were the books of Hebrew law, history, and prophecy, which for us form the Old Testament. Of these our lesson says that whatever writing is inspired of God helps to build up life in us. This is a good doctrine of inspiration. When a book helps to make life noble and true, it is part of the inspired scriptures of God.

How different is the idea of inspiration which led the translators who made the authorized version to say, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," and to define scripture as the books of the Old and New Testaments!

When we take the true idea of inspiration as meaning that which inspires, how rich we are! We have not only all the fine record of man's search after God in the human experiences we find in what we call the Bible, but the wealth of all that is great and uplifting in literature everywhere. Wherever human life has risen to its dignity, and voiced itself in words, we to-day can find inspiration. Our Bible is wide as human experience. Our poets and prophets and teachers are of no one land or literature. Whatever inspires is inspired of God.

IV. How does this help the Unfolding of Life?

We have seen how life develops by unconscious imitation of those among whom we live, of the men and women we admire. Such influence is, perhaps, the most powerful factor of all toward the shaping of life,—at any rate, at the first. We are almost made what we are by the society we keep.

Now books are the entrance into a society just as mighty to mould us. The unseen society of the imagination works on us for good or ill just as powerfully as the seen companionships. But that unseen society may be of the noblest order. Ruskin well reminds us that every great writer says of his best writing: "This is the best of me. This I saw and knew. This, if anything of mine, is worth your memory," and then goes on to point out to us that into the society of such as these we may enter if we will. "You may listen all day long, not to the casual talk, but to the studied, determined chosen addresses of the wisest of men." There is open to us, if we are willing to be worthy of it, the society of "the chosen and the mighty of every place and time, waiting to talk to us in the best words that they can choose of the things nearest their hearts." (See "Sesame and Lilies," Part I.)

It is in that sense that all noble writing is inspired. It is no written word merely, but the means by which there is preserved for us the possibility of entering into personal companionship with the great and good of every time and of every age. They have been on this road of life before us. They have met its conditions, as we have to meet them. Out of the fulness of their experience, they are waiting to give us counsel for the journey, to tell us what they found hard, to warn us of what proved unprofitable or harmful, to cheer us with the courage of their success or to hearten us in our hour of failure. There is, perhaps, no source of unfailing help and inspiration so mighty as that of the sacred writings of the world,— sacred not in that they form part of some collection of so-called sacred books, but with the higher sacredness of sincerity and truth, of clear vision and noble courage.

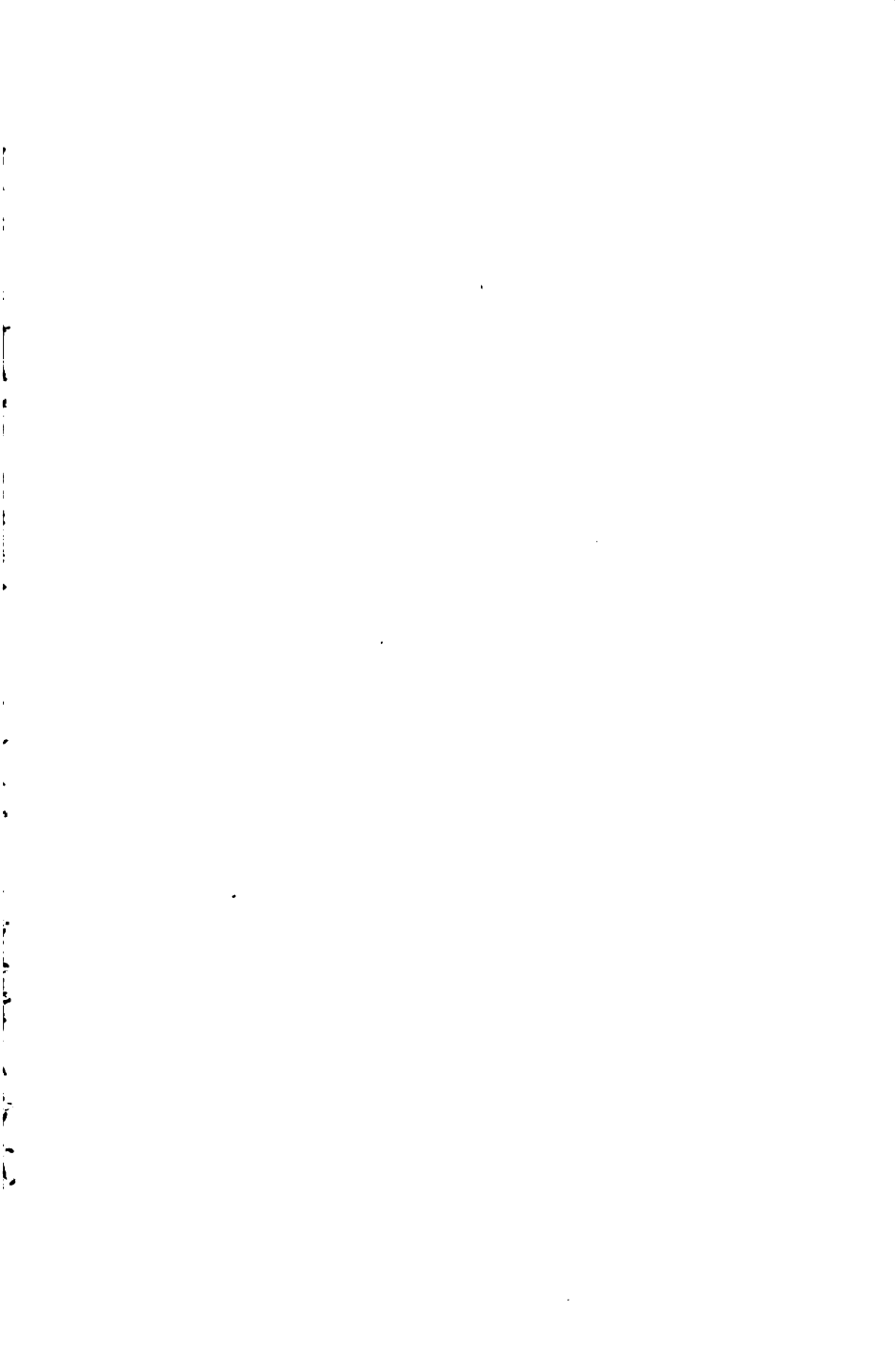
V. The Aim of these Lessons.

Now some of this writing is in the Bible. As we have seen, it is a very varied literature. Some of it is utterly useless for any purpose of upbuilding character. Some of it is merely interesting, as the fancies of a little child are. Much of it is utterly unintelligible to all save those who have given it special study. You might as well put a Greek play into the hands of a child as give much that is in the Bible to the average intelligent reader.

But much of it is alive with the tremor of eager human life, and needs only a little care to become once more the living speech of a living soul. Then it, too, is a power. We can feel the quality of the high living of men like Paul, can have awakened in us a spirit akin to that of an Amos or an Isaiah, may, if we will, face life's problems not alone, but in good society, as we read the book of Job. More than all, we may, if we will, come to feel the beauty of the greatness of them all in Jesus. This has been the aim of these lessons.







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